

MUSIC REVIEWS COMICS INTERVIEWS AND MORE!

# BRUTARIAN

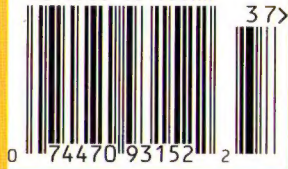
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2002

PETER MURPHY | MARY WORONOV | JIM THOMPSON | P5 !  
FREDDIE STEADY KRC | BILLY LEE RILEY | TIM KELLY,  
ABBY DENSON & JENNY GONZALEZ COMIX

2-  
by  
Jenny  
Gonzalez

OH GHAAAAD!

REMEMBER THIS SAWNG?  
(SHREEK!) I WAS IN  
7TH GRADE!

REMEMBER IT?  
(SHRIEEK!) I JUST  
CRAPPED MY KHAKIS  
OVER IT.

♪ ♪  
cum on  
eileen

JUKEBOX



"DUMB SHRIEKING  
YUPPIE COMIX"

JG  
02

POOP



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BRUTARIAN HAS A NEW ADDRESS AND E-MAIL! PLEASE TAKE NOTE! From Now on, forward all postal correspondence to:

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**BLOW YOURSELF  
UP**

**BRUTARIAN**

No. 37

Asked if he really was of the opinion, that though, in general, happiness was very rare in human life, a man was not sometimes happy in the moment that was present, he answered "Never, but when he is drunk."

*Samuel Johnson to James Boswell  
(Life of Johnson, Vol. II)*

"I think that we should also remember that they didn't do it for monetary gain. They did it because they thought that they were doing the right thing. I personally feel that they were stupid."

—Julie Nixon Eisenhower, quoted  
in *The New York Times*, July 15, 1973

From the **SUBLIME**  
to the **RIDICULOUS**



# A Brand-New 32

by Paul A. Toth

More than anybody, Jim Thompson was a white trash poet, rendering the stories of those who never once shimmied in the glow of the American success story. They loathe themselves and everybody else, and they're survivors only in the most rudimentary sense of the world: They still breathe. This they manage despite their degradation, nine times out of ten brought on by themselves, with a little help from a world that never minds kicking the falling man...when nobody's looking, of course. They survive like a drunk I saw in Toronto, blind and apparently schizophrenic, screaming, "BA-BA! BA-BA! BA-BA!" all through the night, until someone asked him to please be quiet and he changed his chant to, "FUCK OFF! FUCK OFF! FUCK OFF!" howling from deep inside himself at something that could not be torn out, smashed or choked. He was a real Jim Thompson character, except in a Thompson novel he would have become Jesus Christ and brought hell down on his tormentors, setting half of Toronto on fire and screaming, "FUCK OFF! FUCK OFF! FUCK OFF!"

Thompson and the bottle paint an old picture, one about as worn out as Praying Hands, and that is the folklorist connection between ink and bottle. Like William Faulkner duck

ing imaginary North-by-Northwest biplanes swooping down on hang-over plains. Or Malcolm Lowry not only living underneath the volcano but occasionally assaulting women in its shadows. Or William S. Burroughs beating back time with a heroin whip that inflicts pain only when its affects wear off, leaving brain and -body stretched across a Dali clock. Or Hunter S. Thompson's making a career of pharmaceutical distortion and becoming the Keith Richards of writing, a reverse role model of indestructibility.

Like the need to write itself, the desire to drink, shoot, pop and snort resists all reasonable evidence that there are easier ways to live and write. But then, its not about easy. Its about boredom. Perhaps the common thread that sews these two cloths together is less the tired creative genius gimmick but rather a compulsion to fuse imagination with reality, to not just play rock n' roll in the case of Keith Richards, but be it. To not just document time and all its permutations in the case of Burroughs, but master it, or at least observe it like some cool monk monitoring the evil winds of history.

For a few, like crime novelist Jim Thompson,



alteration is a call to hell. Cleansing the doors of perception reveals not some watery world purged of the human impulses, but rather a spongy night soaked to the gills with murder and sex. For such writers, the drug of choice seems only to release them into hard, dark gusts, like a young bird given a shot of whiskey down the beak by mother, followed by a winged shove into a funnel cloud.

Probably it's failure that tortures most, of nerve and poise and courage, qualities that we may soon learn are less willed than genetically granted. In *The Alcoholics*, Thompson explained, the alcoholics depressed mood pulls him two ways. While it insists that great deeds must be done by way of proving himself, it insidiously resists his doing them. It tells him simultaneously that he must, and cant. That he is certain to fail, but must succeed. This last line describes the three kinds of alcoholic writers. The first, and most prevalent, dreams of writing but struggles with alcoholism, the drink eventually winning over a weak talent and will. The second, and least prevalent, eventually puts drinking away, replacing it with the compulsion to write, which has been hardened by the worst hangovers and fueled by a need to do something compulsive now that the old compulsion is gone but still urging parole for itself: "One more chance, mister. I won't lead you wrong this time. Come on, be a pal. I was younger then. I won't start no trouble this time." There will always be a compulsion of one kind or another for this type; its only a matter of who or what.

Finally, there are those with the talent and will but an utter inability to completely cast off the monkey, managing to compose while the monkey sleeps, enduring its maniacal fits that may come every week or month or year.

Among the monkey-addled, we count Thompson, who went crazy with writing



between the other spurts of craziness. Or the other way around. These alcoholics are chronic in the truest sense, manageably handicapped, their worst behavior unpredictable in timing or severity. They're in love with an asshole (two, counting themselves) and, unable to leave, learn to live in separate quarters most of the time. Its an arrangement that falls the articles of faith adhered to by the strictly recovered and practicing alcoholic alike. In the manner of married people who can no longer tolerate living together yet never divorce, it seems a wholly unsatisfying nonresolution. Yet maybe its the best and only working solution for those who cannot, for whatever reason, leave for good. These types usually live a long time, however unpleasantly.

Meanwhile, something extra drives writers like Thompson: The desire to coolly, calmly and with humor plunge down into the worst aspects of himself (or at least the deeper ends of his imagination) and probe, like Jacques Cousteau. He wants to be calm and objective enough to see the humor a killer possesses, to know and understand the blackest hearts of the worst scam artists, to render them as part of the biological landscape, like sharks and rats. Natural, that is.

The next day you wake up a little sick at all of it, shaky, ridden with anxieties, and no doubt you're on your way to a bender, medicating these long comic/horrible feelings into a roller coasting train that leaves Panic Attack Station and arrives at Its All Right Now Juncture. You spend your life like this because somehow the easier life you know exists is less important than this less graspable and, through every measure by which most people measure reality, doesn't even exist. This is the hard-boiled version. You could call it chasing evil butterflies with hamfists. But you love those terrible butterflies. Skitter across the surface of a dead man's mind and dip into something

living or at least freshly dead: There's nothing for you out here any more but temporary sobriety, nothing but temporary sobriety and enormous bills. All-but-exhausted. Huh? What's the matter? Papa, the whole thirty-two, I got nothing but the whole thirty-two.



The whole thirty-two being the so-called thirty-two possible plots, which Thompson boiled down to one: Things a'int what they seem. That's the mystery that drives us nuts, yet deep down were all drama queens, and what we really want is every solved crime to lead to an even deeper, darker crime, until we get to some unspeakable murder mystery at the heart of the universe that can never be solved, not by Conrad, not by Spielberg, not by crime writers, poets, screenwriters, holy men, fortune tellers, talk show hosts, mathematicians, scientists or, if you're a believer, God, for that would spoil the show, and you know what the end of the show means.

Were getting at why people make up crime stories. Isn't there enough to go around? The common wisdom is the fiction gives us a justice we don't get in real life. But that's wrong. What it really gives us is more mystery, bookstores and film libraries full of them, one mystery leading to another. The men who go straight down that hole and must dig up more and more and more. That's their job. You know how much all that booze cost? And ya flip him five bucks for a paperback? That won't even pay for one bender, pal. But then, if you paid more, head write less. You gotta pay the writers cheap so they keep digging more and more and more. How longs an ending, a page, two? How longs it take the detective to emerge from a weeks hard thinking, gather all the suspects, and start in on the same old spiel? You really think that's all we care about? We cant wait to get to the end so we can start the next.

But the writers, especially the drunks and the addicts, aren't satisfied with this appearance of mystery. They want to walk right down the mineshaft into it. That's the only way to get the good shit any way. But its an ugly place, and there's things you don't wanna mess with down there, subsidiary elements like spiders

and bats. Yep, they're all there. Its no cliché'. But you get yourself down in those caves and that's what the booze comes in handy for first, getting past that initial and wise hesitation, and you light yourself a torch, and then you pour some more booze down the old hatch. Goddamn it, now were reading hieroglyphics. Were down in Egyptian mysteries and further, back to where all crime traces its roots, the oldest career and all that shit. The flames are flickering on the walls and you're not just in a story, or better yet YOUR story, but THE story: THE STORY ITSELF.

And when you wake up, you've got the mother of all hangovers thumping you on the head with a rolling pin. And now you gotta climb back up out of those bats and spiders and go to dinner with the in-laws...after cleaning the puke off your shoes.

Why do you drink?

Don't dare ask that question. They turn mean. You can kick 'em in the nuts but they'll get up mad as hell and come even harder. If you tie their hands, they bite. If you break their teeth, they'll spit. If you rip out their tongue, they'll scream "BA-BA!" into the night, cut-up Thompson chopped and diced: "Mine had taken a little of the perkiness out of me. The perkiness out of me and taken a little double-distilled screwball to hell. I wish to hell I was dead."

Writers want to edit civilization. They want a new creator, a brand new thirty-two.

## SIDEBAR:

### An Alternative Approach to Not Drinking



Sometimes you write more for yourself than anyone else, usually because you want to remember something you experienced or not forget something you don't want to re-experience. Here, then, are a few instructions on not drinking; worth keeping in mind for those who choose the path or, more likely, wake up on it.

Don't waste your time trying to convince yourself life is better without alcohol. What you tell yourself when drinking is true: Life is much better when you're drunk. Is there one thing in life to which you've maintained such steadfast commitment?

The only reason to quit drinking is time. Time is limited. Here's a simple test. Add the number of hours per week spent languidly drunk. Now add the number of hours spent in the damp lingering misery of hangovers. Compare. If the result seems reasonable, continue drinking. You don't have a problem. If you've decided to quit, here's how: Find some tranquilizers. Don't bother with Kava Kava or other herbal remedies. They don't work. Waste of money. End of story.

Tranquilizers are essential to knocking out the anxiety attacks you'll encounter in the first few alcohol-free days. You're going to remember these days intensely and associate them, for better or worse, with not drinking. Believe me, if this has not yet been proved by scientific research, it will be. Withdrawal is a brain scarring experience. Get some tranquilizers. Go to your doctor, read off a laundry list of real or imagined life changes, and use the words "nervous breakdown." That should do the trick. If not, add the words "my attorney."

Well, hello, sleepyhead. It's two days later. Now it's time to enjoy life without hangovers. Eat a lot. You're going to get fat anyway. Alcoholism is a great diet (unless you're one of those sociopaths who can eat with a hangover). Do all the things you used to want to do but passed out before starting — you know, major undertakings like reading.

Stay up as late as you like. Even with only one hour of sleep, you won't show up at work wanting to chew off your coworkers' fingers, nor will you need sixteen aspirin, eight cups of coffee and a little wine (because nobody will notice if you really, really, really don't want them to) just to get out the door. You'll merely feel tired. You'll ask yourself, "You mean, this is the way normal people feel on Mondays?" Yes. This is one of your rewards. Your new week equals one of your old seasons. Now you'll know what



incredible cowards your coworkers really are for calling in sick with "migraine headaches" and "colds." However, you will need to undertake a new addiction. Pick something as harmless as possible, because whatever you choose, you'll overdo. It's the way you are. This is all you need to know: You're going to find a new addiction, so choose wisely.

Do not become a Nondrinker. That is what many people choose as their replacement personality. It's a pathetic choice. You don't want to become the guy who insists on proving he's as crazy straight as drunk. You may equally embarrass yourself, but no one else will enjoy it the way they once did. Instead, they'll develop a hyper-self-consciousness due to the lack of the one ingredient essential to your previous 100 percent lack of self-consciousness. Meanwhile, you'll notice people noticing and become even more self-conscious. There's only one thing worse than a drunk wearing a lampshade, and that's an ex-drunk wearing a lampshade. You will sicken the room with brightly lit self-consciousness.

As for the twelve steps, don't even take the first. Twelve step meetings exist for the worst form of Nondrinker, and we've covered that, right? Divide your life expectancy by twelve and you've got the estimated amount of time it will take to complete each step. In other words, here's a program you will never complete, so why bother starting? Your higher power is your brain. Second in charge is your wallet, which will remain much fuller if you skip buying books explaining the 12 steps. Consider that 9 out of 10 people attending AA meetings are smoking themselves to death. AA members also spend a lot of time praying for serenity. Serenity is the feeling you get when — and just about only when — you're drunk. This doesn't seem like a good thing to concentrate on if you're trying not to think about drinking. Of course, all 12-stoppers do is think about not drinking.

Now that you have your life in front of you, everything relies on one realization: Life is mostly shit interrupted by periodic bursts of joy. Now decide how you want to endure the shit. You can shovel the shit out of your immediate surroundings. You can paint the shit. You can dance in and on the shit. You can scribble your name in the shit. You can try somebody else's shit. You can hold your nose. If you drink, you will feel better about the shit for a few hours, perhaps forget it even exists. The next day, you will still be in shit and, on top of it, feel like shit. In a sense, you become shit to deny the existence of shit.

Oh, you may start drinking again. But don't feel bad. Everybody tries everything, from psychotic mates to heart attacks, several times before giving up for good. Just remember when it happens that no one cares but you. In fact, most people will be relieved that you've placed yourself back on their, "At least I'm better than him/her" list.

Finally, if all else fails, remember Salvador Dali's response when asked about drug use. "I don't need drugs. I am drugs." True, Dali burned to death in a horrible fire, but before that, painted some memorable things. And it's a good line that makes not being loaded seem heroic. Which it is, on this planet.





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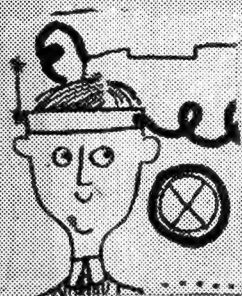
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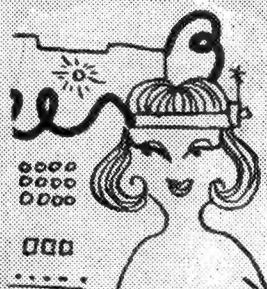
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## OPEN THE DOOR TO YOUR MIND!



### angel and devil



While the bongos give off with the beat, this chick is finding out what makes people tick!

People have asked from time to time what gives me the idea I'm qualified to offer advice. I think people who went through something themselves often know more about it than the "experts." Anyway I've never felt any hesitation about telling the things that have happened to me—or to friends—and saying what we did under the circumstances. I think many another "civilian" woman could write her own column just as I did if she feels strongly about something and can write.

What I've written comes from my own struggle to build a better life as a chick.

I hope it inspires you to do much much more.

Perhaps she was thinking, "Where am I headed?" "What's going to become of me?" "How much longer can I stand this stupid life?" All perfectly good, normal, run-of-the-mill, three-o'clock-in-the-morning thoughts for a single girl!

Most of us aren't fortunate enough to know the one thing we'd like to do as young women. So you just begin by putting one foot in front of the other and doing what's there the best that you can do it. If you keep doing that one thing with extraordinary verve and skill, I firmly believe something better turns up—and better and better. That's about all ambition is and how it works.

Talent isn't usually what's lacking. All of us have some of that. We really do. Some of the most scintillating successes of our time have less natural talent than less-famous contemporaries but they have honed it and used every erg of it and that suffices. I'd be the first to go along with the idea that ambition

is something to hug to yourself. When you go around yapping about it, you dissipate it. Ambition, however—naked, raw ambition—I not only don't think is a dirty word, I think it's a lovely, honorable, admirable, scintillating, beautiful quality for any girl to have and people with ambition are more fun to be around than people without it. Women alone should and can have it in spades.

honest, girlish, straight-from-the-

"If you know what it's like to hate yourself and be afraid to look in the mirror, then maybe I can help you..."

and frank advice from one female to another

Many women wonder just how neurotic they are. Are they very much crazier than other people? I have come to the conclusion that almost everybody has plenty of neuroses. The only difference between the person you like to be around and the one about whom you say, "Oh, dear, she's too neurotic," is control. The "normal" person has his neuroses under better control (i.e., he gets his work done, and having worked on his fears through the years, y with an analyst, they crop out less frequently).



**SENSATIONAL — NEW  
MODERN MIRACLE!**



**P5!**



I, too, have my grievances that never get acted on. How about yours? If you understand that it's you who are screaming on the brakes before you reach your heart's desire, it may not get the brakes unstuck, but at least you won't feel so frustrated.

Consider all the complainers you know with legitimate grievances who never act: The housewife says she's so exhausted she can't stand up. Yet she won't let her family sleep on unironed sheets. (Could it satisfy her to be a martyr?) A woman sniftles that her husband has belittled and humiliated her for fourteen years, but she makes no move to see a lawyer. (Could she feel comfortable being mistreated?)

This is the not-very-original thought that hit me like a ton of bricks: *You yourself are the one who keeps you from having everything in the world you think you want.*

"We think doing everything is the same as enjoying everything. We mistake external stimulation for spiritual intensity....

When we pressure ourselves to do all that we should be able to do, we fail to fully experience and enjoy what we are doing....

...focus on what's important: nature, companionship, food, health. Having time to look at the stars—away from the TV, phone, and fax machine—is pretty incredible."

While taking a break from high-stress living is a great way to get back in touch with simple pleasures, even more important is learning to appreciate the subtler joys of experiences you have every day.

Savoring simple pleasures means focusing on the moment. The philosopher Pascal once commented on the human tendency to live as though the present were merely a means to the future. "So we never live, but we hope to live—and as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so."

One of the best ways to live fully in the present is to open yourself up to new experiences. If you're like most of us, by the time you're in your twenties, you've pretty much decided who you are, what you do and don't do, what sorts of things you enjoy. Throw away those definitions! As a wise old woman I know likes to say, "The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth of the hole." Liven up your everyday existence by adding a fresh adventure each week—even if it's just trying a new food.

Only you can judge where your life needs trimming or plumping. Learning to live life to the fullest is more a long-term goal than a quick fix, but you can start today. Calm down, focus on the experiences at hand, and revel.

Somehow we pattern life in a way that never allows us enough time to actually taste its flavor. There is continual busyness, continual searching for the next moment, a continual grasping quality to life.

"Manifest plainness, Embrace simplicity, Reduce selfishness, Have few desires."—Lao-tzu

a sense of humor is not merely a matter of trying to tell jokes or make puns, trying to be funny in a deliberate fashion. It involves seeing the basic irony of the juxtaposition of extremes, so that one is not caught taking them seriously, so that one does not seriously play their game of hope and fear. This is why the experience of the spiritual path is so significant, why the practice of meditation is the most insignificant experience of all. It is insignificant because you place no value judgment on it. Once you are absorbed into that insignificant situation of openness without involvement in value judgment, then you begin to see all the games going on around you.

If you work in accordance with the basic insignificance of what is, then you begin to see the humor in this kind of solemnity, in people making such a big deal about things.



When you start to work on your house, stand in each room and ruthlessly see what you can throw out. Better to be sparsely but nicely furnished than saddled with monsters. Regroup and rearrange what's left. Let some new thoughts in.

es, put soul in your room. If each of us could change our house, we would change the personality of the earth's inhabitants and make them more reflective and infinitely thoughtful, meditative and indirect.

# Budget Decorating

Put on some records—rock-n-roll, cha cha—pull down the shades and dance naked a couple of hours.



● Make a tape of your favorite songs.

Buy several yards of brown paper, small cans of enamel or flat paint, cheap brushes. Spread everything out on newspapers and paint murals.

## NATURE ROOM

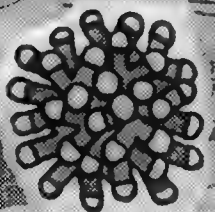
In addition to the lights, your room should be a kind of greenhouse with lots of plants and natural funky, earthy smells. You should have lots of animals. A simple two dollar fish will float easily in some sort of bowl and allow you to sit and look at it for hours on end to induce the vision of tranquility that

you may have been seeking. Beavers are also nice.

If you can possibly have a small stream flowing through the room, that's groovy. Remember, you can't step twice into the same stream. Not without getting wet feet, anyway.

You can spatter-paint an unattractive floor with several shades of brightly colored enamel. Dribble shocking pink from a sponge all around the floor. Let it dry. With a clean sponge, use turquoise next, then, lime green and moss green, drying between coats. Use any color combination you wish, and take your time.

● Paint your bathroom Chippendale red



Put lots of little lights into one big one. To begin with, you'll need (all from the hardware store) a porcelain wall socket and about twenty double sockets. Directions: Screw a double socket into the porcelain socket. Then screw another double socket into the first one!...another into that, and on until you've got an interesting shape. (soon as you actually begin to do this, you'll see what we mean.) When you have a geometric design you like, insert seven-watt light bulbs into all open sockets. The wiring of this unique lamp is easy, but we recommend you ask the man in the hardware store how you do it.



In addition to the starlight ceiling, you might also place on a table a little revolving stage of the kind that you see in jewelry store windows. You can get one in a jewelry store window. Place costume jewelry or little bits of plastic on this revolving stage and plug it into an electric outlet so that the light bulb reflects on the gems, just like the moon reflects the light of the sun.

It's easy to organize a FREAK-OUT PARTY, as you have to drink into your mind and let things happen. Digging with psychedelics, music, springing with jump-on wheels, growing an enormous, beautiful, or other things in time. LOVE.

To be the center for the party, study up on the old chair with DAY-GLOW PAINT or bright colors, then light the whole scene with DAY-GLOW lights. Use the Day-Glow to put flowers or art supplies around. This will make everything glow with love and beautiful, beautiful colors. Guaranteed to make your friends come away.

We can really make your guests get with a mind-blowing light show that will blow you probably faster in your house right now. A TV set and a cut-through background that the kind with colored lights in the background. Turn on your TV and watch the things happen in time with the music by turning the lights on and off the way to the left or right. Now you're the master of the TV show. This is a guarantee. The more you play the more you'll be a master of the party. YOU ARE NOW FREAKING, ONE step is.

Make your beautiful friends, people with really pretty, and other amazing new and exciting music. BLOW YOUR MIND, FREAK OUT, and get your own of colored paper. Don't give them as to a piece of colored paper. They will let them know what kind of music it's going to be. And everyone is going to be a part of the party. They will let them know what kind of music it's going to be. And everyone is going to be a part of the party. They will let them know what kind of music it's going to be. And everyone is going to be a part of the party.

Play Guitar Instantly or money back!

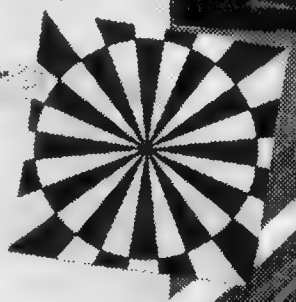
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FREE BONUS

GIRLS



right on.

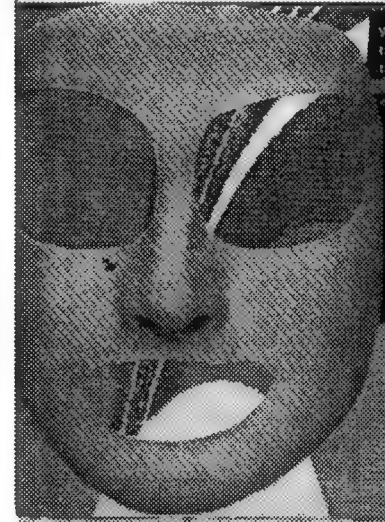
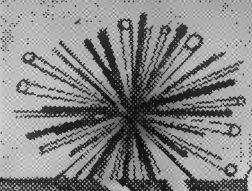


### Far-Out Sixties Speak

- Groovy: just fine
- Fire out: great!
- Out of sight: terrific!
- Good vibes: positive feelings
- Be-in: joyous gathering
- Rap: discuss
- Joint: marijuana cigarette
- Bread: money pinhandled by flower children
- Threads: clothes

When things really are out of control, sometimes things that don't always together STUMBLE! This is a chance to show something really out of control. Perhaps you'll see lots of stars with DAY-GLOW and some DAY-GLOW.

DAY-GLOW lights are great, bright, colorful, and groovy. They're perfect for your party and a great way to show off your DAY-GLOW. The more you play the more you'll be a master of the party. YOU ARE NOW FREAKING, ONE step is.





# NATURE CAN MAKE A COMEBACK IN YOUR GHETTO PAD THE SECRET IS IN-

## decorating

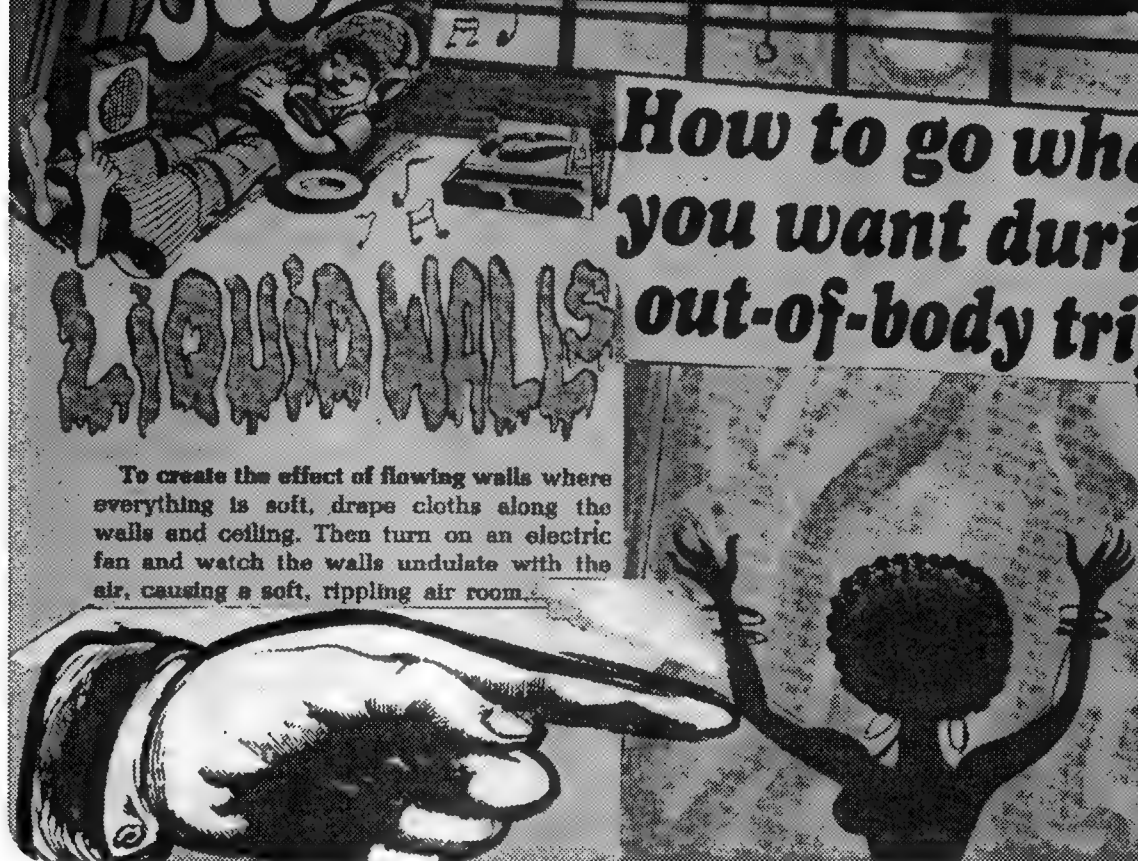
### With Soul

Young ghetto shouldn't be forced to live in old houses. The whole world is changing. But builders today are still putting up old houses. Along the same lines, old buildings and hundreds of years ago. Houses are built on land, earth and walls to separate us from nature. In the future, houses will be made out of plants and will grow with nature. They will try to stimulate the light on a tree-top greenhouse, growing plants that stand on the earth. In the tree-top house, the walls and the floor will move if motion. Everything is flowing. Everything. The house should always be changing.

## How to go where you want during out-of-body trips!

### LIQUID WALLS

To create the effect of flowing walls where everything is soft, drape cloths along the walls and ceiling. Then turn on an electric fan and watch the walls undulate with the air, causing a soft, rippling air room.






# Billy Lee Riley

HE'S STILL MR. RED HOT!

part 2 of an interview by Ken Burke

*Sunday 24 Jan 1970*  
FROM MEMPHIS TENNESSEE  
**Rock on Roll** *show*  
with  
  
"The Sound of  
Rock & Roll"  
Billy Lee Riley  
on New 44 Screen  
119 Madison Avenue  
212 Madison Avenue  
212 West 30 St. 100  
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212 Madison Avenue  
212 Madison Avenue  
**The Legendary**  
**BILLY LEE RILEY**  
+Johnny & the Roccas  
Hard-Rock-Cafe  
**PANORAMA**  
The record: 6-100  
The album: 11-100



KB: I think that "Red Hot" and "Flying Saucers Rock 'n' Roll" ARE TWO OF THE GREATEST RECORDS OF THE ROCK 'n' roll ERA.

BLR: Thank you. Some say they're classics. They've inspired a lot of artists. As a matter of fact, BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN said he cut his teeth on "Flying Saucers Rock 'n' Roll." He said he grew up on my stuff.

KB: Praise indeed from The Boss.

BLR: And Bob Dylan said he considers me his hero. I opened some shows for him, and that's the way he introduced me "My hero." That was good. Ya know, Bob is a guy that a lot of people don't understand, and I didn't until I met him. Once I met him and sat down and talked with him - he turned out to be a good guy. I've worked with him and worked with his son. Jacobs a nice guy. Real nice young guy - he told me "I've known about you ever since I was a baby. I remember when I was just two or three years old walking around wearing Billy Lee Riley T-shirts." (Laughs.) So there are a lot of good people in this business, and there's some that AUNT WORTH A CRAP.

That's the business, man - and that's the way it is.

KB: A SUN OUTTAKE "She's My Baby," seems like an early version of "Red Hot."

BLR: That's a later version of "Red Hot." I did that drunk one night. I was in the studio and I had been trying to cut an album, and everybody got completely off the subject, and we began drinking and having a party. So, I was pretty high that night, and couldn't think of anything to sing so I just started singing that. I didn't even know it was put on tape, and I didn't know it had ever be released.

KB: It says on these album notes that Carl Perkins' band members Clayton Perkins and 'Fluke' Holland

played on that.

BLR: No. Nobody played on my records except The Little Green Men. Brad Suggs was not on any of my sessions. 'Smoochy' Smith was not on any of my sessions. Every session I did at Sun Records had Roland James, there was J.M., Martin Willis, me, Jimmy Wilson - just my band.

KB: What about the green suits that your band The Little Green Men wore.

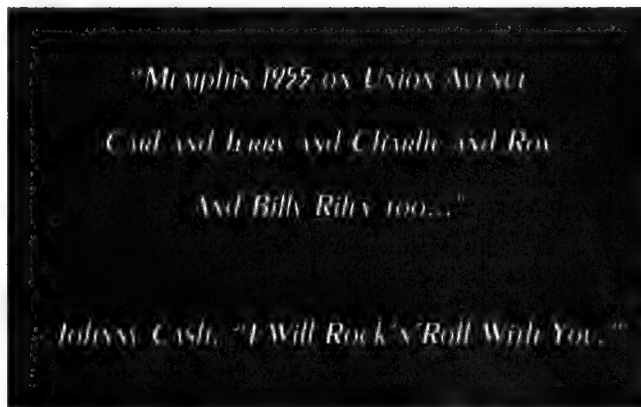
BLR: (Laughs.) We just decided that if we were going to be Little Green Men, we oughta wear green suits. We found a tailor down on Main Street in Memphis, picked out the material for them - they looked like they were made out of pool table cloth. After we got 'em made, we found out they weighed about a hundred pounds! They were nice looking, but they were almost like 'felt, and they were bright Kelly green. They looked good on stage - but the first time we were out, we got mobbed in Mississippi, and got a few buttons tore off. We used to get mobbed a lot.

KB: What other type of promotional stunts did you do at Sun?

BLR: Well, we did a 72-hour marathon back in '58 at the Starlite club in Frazier, Tennessee. And we actually stayed on stage for 72 hours, and we had the worlds record for a while, until somebody in Canada did 80 hours and knocked us down.

KB: How did you guys manage that?

BLR: There was always somebody in the club, so we had to do it. We took our food on the stage; we had people cater food to us, making sure we had plenty of coffee. We got some TV coverage, a lot of good press in the papers. We got some publicity out of it, not as much as I though wed get. We really didn't



GET THE TYPE OF NATIONAL COVERAGE THAT I WANTED - WE GOT COVERAGE, BUT NOT THE TYPE THAT HELPED US.

KB: How did you STRETCH OUT YOUR SET?

BLR: We didn't have "sets," we just stayed up there. We played a lot of instrumentals - long ones. (Laughs) I'd sing until I got tired. Then, we'd just play, get something to eat, sit on the floor and played. I tell ya, when it was over...we were ready to go home. The funny part about it is, when I got home and went to bed, I couldn't go to sleep!

KB: I take it the Little Green Men played your fair share of package shows.

BLR: Yeah, we played a whole lot of package stuff. We played with the Sun package with all the different Sun artists. Sometime they'd be Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Warren Smith, Jerry Lee Lewis. We'd usually have a headliner and some of the lesser knowns. Sometimes they'd mix us up with some of the Nashville guys. We'd do shows with guys like Ferlin Husky, Hank Snow and whoever.

KB: Did the Nashville guys give you a lot of crap about being rock 'n' rollers?

BLR: No, they was real nice to us. They enjoyed it, and we backed a lot of them. Any band that wasn't self-contained, we backed 'em. Ferlin Husky, Brenda Lee, a bunch of folks. Ferlin was the only one on that particular show who actually thanked us. All the rest just walked off the stage, except for Ferlin who complimented us.

KB: I've read stuff that says the Nashville guys hated all

you Memphis guys.

BLR: I don't think that's true. The fact is they all tried to imitate us at one time. Marty Robbins did rockabilly, even Ernest Tubb did a little rockabilly. So there wasn't any jealousy, it's just that Country really wasn't happening at that time. Country had been around for such a long time, then all of sudden our music started to take over, and for a while there they tried to get in on it. I think they're more jealous

nowadays - of each other. They're all a bunch of jealous musicians; afraid the other one is going to make a dollar more, have a bigger stage, and be noticed more. I don't particularly care too much for Nashville people now.

KB: What was your typical set like back then? Did you do just 3 or 4 songs?

BLR: No we did about 30-35 minutes, about 8 to 10 songs.

KB: And you did your current singles and what else?

BLR: You know it's strange, but we very seldom did my singles. I did mostly other peoples

songs other than mine. If I thought one of my songs wasn't as strong as some others, I wouldn't do 'em. I'd do Chuck Berry and Little Richard songs, things I could really build a show with. Of course all the rest of 'em did their own stuff, but I did other peoples songs - I did a variety show. I gave the fans a whole lot of stuff and we always stole the show! No matter who the headliner was, we got the greatest raves.

KB: So you guys were the hot regional act?

BLR: We were hot everywhere we'd go. We went places with one thing in mind: To make everyone else

I did a VARIETY show. I  
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always stole the show!  
No matter who the  
HEADLINER was, we got  
the GREATEST RAVES.



look bad! We didn't care who was on stage, we knew we were going to wipe 'em out! That was our main objective. I don't know of anyplace we ever played where we came in second.

KB: Were you a bit of a rounder during the 50s?

BLR: I was crazy! Wild -- I drank a lot in the 50s, and I was wild. I thought all there was to life was wine, women, and song -- and I had my share of all of it! That was one of my biggest faults. I put all of that before my career and it hurt my career. Of course that's a long time ago.

KB: What was the disagreement you had with Sam Phillips concerning "Red Hot" and "Flying Saucers Rock 'n' Roll"?

BLR: He didn't promote it -- he sabotaged the record. He dropped my record for "Great Balls Of Fire." That's why I had my greatest disagreement with him. Of course, we still worked together after that, but it never was the same. But yeah, he had deliberately quit selling my record -- right in front of me, with me standing there listening to him -- he canceled my record. So when he did that, I lost respect for him. He just forgot everybody but except Jerry Lee Lewis, and that doesn't make me feel bad at Jerry Lee! That had nothin' to do with how I felt about Jerry Lee. Whatever I felt about Jerry Lee would be personal. That's what caused me to leave Sun. The same thing with Johnny Cash and everybody else. At one time, they've all made the same statement.

KB: Was this something you guys talked about while it was happening?

BLR: Heck yeah, we weren't afraid to talk about it. Everybody knew it. Sam denied it. Sam'll deny it to this day, but he knows it's true. But it backfired on him. He dropped all of us for Jerry Lee, and then

Jerry Lee put the bomb on him. He went over to Europe and screwed himself up and lost his popularity on Sun Records, then he fell. So, what goes around, comes around.

KB: You and your band left Sun to go to Philadelphia at one point, right?

BLR: In 1958, I decided I wanted to go up and talk to Dick Clark. So, we got the band together and drove up there, we went unannounced, didn't even know if we were going to get in to see this guy. But we did, I went in to talk to him, and he was about ready to go on his show -- and he knew who I was. He wanted to sign me up for one of his labels, Came, Swan one of them. And, he actually called a studio and set up time, and told the engineer to be there at three o'clock that afternoon because he had a band coming over there that he wanted to record. We got halfway over there...then decided to come right back home to Memphis! We were kids and we were scared. Scared to go out on that limb, see. I told the guys "Aw man, let's go back to Sun. We'll feel better." It was strictly a fear thing as far as I was concerned.

KB: Are you sorry that's a road you didn't take?

BLR: Oh gosh, I'm sorry that I didn't make a lot of moves that I had a chance to make back in them days. I could've been on RCA. Steve Sholes himself, when he was president of RCA in New York set up a session in Canada for me. We went in there and sat around for an hour waiting for their engineer when I started getting that old feeling again "Aw, we don't need RCA." So we got up and left. So I lost that.

KB: So you ended up back at Sun, but things weren't the same?

BLR: Yeah, I went back and cut two or three more

They had a big bass fiddle and I walked through that and tore a big hole in it. Poured whiskey on the piano and consoles. Tipped over the filing machines where he had all his tapes, they went all over the floor. I wrecked it pretty good!

things. I left them in '60. I think my last record with them was late '59.

**KB:** Which record do you think should have been your breakthrough?

**BLR:** Oh "Red Hot" should've been, it was already headed that way. Alan Freed told me that "Red Hot" was going to be a top five record. He told me: "This is a hit record, man. If ever I saw a hit record - this is it." So, Sam Phillips and Jud Phillips got to him and got with his manager - see head already booked me on a nationwide tour. That's the reason I had closed out to come home, so I could cut an album. Sam told me to. I shouldn't have ever told Sam I had the deal, because when I told Sam I had a deal, he went right to work to get me off the tour and have Jerry Lee put on the tour in my place. That's the tour that Jerry Lee and Chuck Berry was on together and fought so much and caused a riot which made them cancel part of the tour. So, that was another big mistake they made because they wouldn't do right. When I got back to Memphis, that's when I found all this stuff out. That's when I went and tore up the studio. Did the studio in.

**KB:** I've read that you poured whiskey all over the console.

**BLR:** (Laughs.) I did that too. They had a big bass fiddle and I walked through that and tore a big hole in it. Poured whiskey on the piano and consoles. Tipped over the filing machines where he had all his tapes, they went all over the floor. I wrecked it pretty good! Then Sam came down, and took me back into his little cubbyhole, and charmed me into believing that I was going to be the next Elvis Presley so, I would be quiet. But he never did anything for me. And

he knows it and he admits it. When we opened the Hard Rock Cafe in Memphis, he was there that night, and I walked over and spoke with him, and he told some other people - while I was standing there, he said "Billy Lee Riley should've been one of the biggest artists I had. I wish I had done more for him - he was a great talent!" So he admitted it.

**KB:** It was a little late, but that was a nice for him to say.

**BLR:** I don't hold anything against Sam. If he needed me, I'd be right there. I'm sort of this way: I don't blame anybody for anything good or anything bad that's happened to me. I'm in control of my own self. Whatever happens to me is strictly up to me. I don't blame anybody, really. Sometimes I blame myself for listening to certain people that steered me wrong. Nobody makes you do anything. I didn't have to stay with Sam. I could've left

Sun. I had several chances. So I can't really feel that down. It's more like I'm disappointed, because he did have something with me - he could've made some money with me. It's not like I could've made money and he couldn't. We could've all had a good thing going. He just didn't do it that way.

**KB:** But "Red Hot" was a pretty good seller in the Mid-South wasn't it?

**BLR:** It sold good regionally. "Flying Saucers" sold more. Both of 'em were good regional sellers, and hit top five and even number one in a lot of places in the South. That's how it worked just before a record would break onto the national charts. And if all those things would've gotten reported, and Sam would've gotten behind 'em, they probably would've hit the national charts. Then, it would've happened, because these records were what was happening at that time. "Red Hot" was - and still is a heck of a record! I don't care where you play it. Before I opened shows for



Bob Dylan, I WAS A GUEST ON ONE OF HIS SHOWS AND I SANG "Red Hot" AND THE PEOPLE WENT CRAZY MAN. THEY DIDN'T KNOW I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THERE - HE CALLED ME OUT FROM THE WINGS AND I DID "Red Hot" WITH HIS BAND - AND THEN PEOPLE WAS CLIMBING UP ON THE CHAIRS. SO THE SONG IS A HECK OF A SONG - IT ALWAYS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE.

**KB:** Did you EVER SEE A royalty check from SUN?

**BLR:** NEVER. NEVER, EVER GOT AN ACCOUNTING.

**KB:** JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU EVER DID AT SUN HAS BEEN RELEASED ON CHARLY, BEAR FAMILY, AVI, AND COLLECTABLES, AND I HAVE READ THAT YOU DON'T GET A DIME FROM ANY OF THOSE COMPANIES - IS THAT TRUE?

**BLR:** WE HADN'T GOTTEN anything. JUST RECENTLY WE STARTED GETTING SOMETHING, BUT THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF MONEY OWED TO ME. THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MANY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ARE OWED TO ME THAT I'LL NEVER GET. BUT, FOR SOME REASON, LAST YEAR THEY STARTED GIVING US SMALL ROYALTY CHECKS. BUT IT IS NOTHING AT ALL COMPARED TO WHAT THEY OWE. THEY'VE SOLD MILLIONS OF RECORDS ON ME SINCE THEY STARTED REISSUING - SINGLES, BOX SETS, DOUBLE BOX SETS, TRIPLE BOX SETS, LPs. AVI'S WAS A HECK OF A SELLING RECORD BEFORE SOMEBODY ELSE PICKED IT UP. ANOTHER LABEL HERE IN THE STATES HAD A RECORD OUT WITH JUST TWO OF MY CUTS ON IT AND I MADE MORE ROYALTIES FROM THOSE TWO CUTS THAN I MADE OF ANY LP - SO IT SOLD A LOT OF RECORDS. SO IF THAT SOLD A LOT OF RECORDS, THAN ALL OF MY OTHER STUFF MUST BE SELLING A LOT. I THINK THIS NEW REISSUE OF COLLECTABLES IS GOING TO BRING ME SOME ROYALTIES TOO.

**KB:** Do you think Sam Phillips was just spreading himself TOO THIN - OR WAS IT JUST A MATTER OF HIM NOT WANTING TO SPEND MONEY?

**BLR:** Oh, he HATED TO SPEND MONEY. HE AND JUD PHILLIPS FOUGHT ALL THE TIME BECAUSE HE EXPECTED JUD TO GO OUT THERE AND PERFORM MIRACLES, BUT HE WOULDN'T

SUPPLY HIM WITH THE FUNDS. I'VE HEARD ORAL FIGHTS BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM MANY TIMES BECAUSE HE WAS TIGHT ON THAT MONEY. HE DIDN'T REALLY SPEND THAT MUCH MONEY ON ANYBODY - NOT EVEN JERRY LEE LEWIS AND HE SPENT MORE OF JERRY THAN HE DID ANYBODY AND THAT WASN'T MUCH. JERRY LEE IS MAD AT SAM PHILLIPS TOO.

**KB:** JERRY LEE RECORDED MORE AT SUN THAN ANYBODY, BUT IT HASN'T BEEN UNTIL RECENTLY THAT HE HAS SUED FOR BACK PAID MENTS.



**BLR:** IT TAKES A LOT OF MONEY TO SUE. I HAD THOUGHT ABOUT IT ON A COUPLE OF OCCASIONS, I HAD TALKED TO ATTORNEYS, AND IT TAKES A WHOLE LOT OF MONEY. THERE ALSO A WHOLE LOT OF TIME INVOLVED. AND - ITS A BIG DEAL, IT DON'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT.

**KB:** EVEN THOUGH YOU WEREN'T PAID WHAT YOU WERE DUE - DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT SAM PHILLIPS?

**BLR:** Well, like I said, I DON'T HOLD ANYTHING AGAINST HIM. I'M STILL A FRIEND OF HIS. BUT THE TRUTH IS TRUTH. I KNOW IN HIS MIND HE BELIEVES WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE AND THAT'S FINE, BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING IS TRUE. I THINK WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN FRIENDS, AND I HOPE HE DOESN'T FEEL ANY OTHER WAY ABOUT ME. WE'VE ALWAYS RESPECTED EACH OTHER. HE JUST MADE SOME MISTAKES. I THINK HE KNOWS THAT BUT HE PROBABLY WON'T ADMIT IT.

**KB:** And you don't hold ANYTHING AGAINST JERRY LEE?

**BLR:** No. IF I HAD BEEN IN JERRY LEE'S PLACE AND SAM HAD PICKED ME TO BE THE ONE TO PROMOTE; I'D HAVE BEEN THE ONE. JERRY LEE WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME WITH THE RIGHT SOUND. AND SAM THOUGHT HE HAD THE NEXT ELVIS PRESLEY - AND HE PROBABLY WOULD'VE HAD IF HE HAD HANDLED HIM RIGHT.

**KB:** If he had RUN THINGS DIFFERENTLY, DO YOU THINK THE SUN LABEL WOULD'VE KEPT GOING LONGER THAN IT DID?



**BLR:** He didn't really have the money at the time, but if he had the money and really worked with all of his artists - he had the best stable of artists in the business in the 50s, he could've almost had a major label. With just what he had, he could have made that label into one of the biggest rockabilly labels in the world and really put Memphis on the map. Right now, as far as music is concerned, Memphis gets no recognition. Its like all of us; it got lost, because Memphis people don't know how to promote music.

**KB:** Do they still know how to make it?

**BLR:** Not anymore. When we were there back in the 50s, if Sam Phillips had been as smart as Berry Gordy, he could've been as big as Berry Gordy. He had artists who were just as good - though they were different. His stable of artists was as good as Berry's, and he could've gone just as far if he had acted like Berry and given everybody a fair chance. But he couldn't do it. When Elvis came by, he dropped all his blues singers. He had some of the greatest blues acts there was, and when Elvis came by - he just garbaged all the blues acts. And with Elvis, well, he could only handle one person at once. He just couldn't take on more than one act.

**KB:** When I asked J.M. Van Eaton if they all followed you out of Memphis out of loyalty, he said "Yes," and the fact that we thought he was really going to make it. Plus, when we were splitting the money, there was a bigger piece of the pie to be had than if we just were side men.

**BLR:** Well, we were a group - we weren't just me. Later, when it came down to the fact that I didn't make it and wasn't going to go as far as some of the other people, they started looking for greener fields, and I did too. So we eventually broke up. Roland left

before anybody. Roland left as soon as Jerry Lee offered him a job, about 1957. He worked for Jerry more than he worked with me - he just started out with me.

**KB:** Were you able to replace him as a guitarist?

**BLR:** Yeah, with me! I did my own guitar work. When Roland played with me, I played rhythm - I had a big

old Martin. When he quit, I went and bought me a new electric guitar and I've played lead ever since. I don't play much now, even though I endorse for Gibson, and I've got a house full of guitars. Now, I mostly play [lead guitar] when I'm doing blues shows. But if I'm doing rockabilly or rock 'n' roll, something I have to bring a lot of showmanship to, a guitar just gets in my way. But I've played lead guitar on a lot of my own records and a lot of Jerry Lee records, even though

Roland was there too. When I wasn't playing lead, I was playing second guitar behind Roland. I played bass on a lot of Jerry's stuff too.

**KB:** Stand-up bass?

**BLR:** No, regular electric. I played bass on some of Charlie Rich's stuff and most of Bill Justis' album, and a lot of recordings where I didn't know who the artist was. Whenever they couldn't find a bass man, they used me. I even played banjo on a record once. Rhythm banjo - I tuned it up like a guitar and began strumming away.

**KB:** How'd the record turn out?

**BLR:** (Laughs.) Turned out OK. It was the first and last time I ever played a banjo though. Just trying to

"Red Hot" was - and still is a heck of a record! I don't care where you play it. Before I opened shows for Bob Dylan, I was a guest on one of his shows and I sang "Red Hot" and the people went crazy man. They didn't know I was supposed to be there - he called me out from the wings and I did "Red Hot" with his band - and then people was climbing up on the chairs

GET IN ON A SESSION AND MAKE THAT \$10.

KB: WAS THAT YOUR REGULAR PAY?

BLR: SOMETIMES YOU GOT \$2 AN HOUR, SOMETIMES \$10 A SESSION.

KB: DID YOU GET PAID RIGHT AFTER THE SESSION?

BLR: ON MOST 'EM. EVERYTHING EXCEPT SUN'S STUFF. AND WE'D GO IN AFTER HE WOULD RELEASE THE RECORD, TURN THE STUFF INTO THE UNION, THEN WE'D GO PICK OUR CHECKS. THEN WE'D BRING 'EM BACK TO [SAM PHILLIPS] AND HE'D PAY US \$2 AN HOUR. HE'D NEVER PAY US UNION SCALE; WE TURNED THE CHECKS BACK OVER TO HIM. SO HE KEPT THE MONEY, WE GOT A LITTLE BIT, BUT HE WOULDN'T PAY US SCALE.

KB: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD SOMETHING LIKE THIS - IT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT.

BLR: WELL...IT HAPPENED. WE'D ENDORSE THE CHECKS BACK TO SAM PHILLIPS AND HE'D PAY US 2 BUCKS AN HOUR OR \$10 A SESSION WHATEVER WAS GOING AT THE TIME.

KB: HOW DID HE GET AWAY WITH THIS?

BLR: BECAUSE WE LET HIM. THE MUSICIANS UNION WAS MORE LAX THAN ANY OTHER UNION, EVEN THOUGH IT IS AFFILIATED WITH THE AFL-CIO. IT WASN'T HANDLED LIKE OTHER LABOR UNIONS, SO THEY GOT AWAY WITH MURDER, MAN. ALSO, NONE OF THE CLUBS WERE UNION, AND WE HAD TO WORK, AND THE UNION TURNED THEIR HEADS.

KB: I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO SPECULATE A LITTLE. IF SAM PHILLIPS HAD SPENT SOME TIME AND MONEY ON YOU, AND YOU HAD THE TYPE OF SUCCESS THAT JERRY LEE LEWIS HAD AS FAR AS SALES GO, DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD'VE BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE IT?

BLR: I THINK I WOULD'VE BEEN DEAD BY NOW. I'M SAYING

THAT BECAUSE I REALLY BELIEVE THAT. YA SEE, IN THE 50s, I WAS YOUNG AND VERY GULLIBLE AND I DRANK LIKE A FISH. I WASN'T AN ALCOHOLIC; I WAS A SOT - A DRUNKARD.

KB: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

BLR: WELL, AN ALCOHOLIC IS AN ALCOHOLIC, AND A SOT IS AN IDIOT. THAT'S WHAT I WAS, I WAS JUST AN IDIOT. ALCOHOL, I JUST COULDN'T HOLD IT, AND I GOT MYSELF INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE. BUT I THINK IF I WOULD'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL BACK IN THE 50s, I WAS ALREADY DRINKING - MAYBE I WOULD'VE GOTTEN INTO THE DRUG SCENE. AND I MIGHT'VE DRUGGED MYSELF TO DEATH.

KB: WOULD THE MUSIC HAVE CHANGED ANY HAD YOU BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL?

BLR: I DON'T THINK SO. IF I'D HAVE BEEN REALLY SUCCESSFUL, I MEAN REALLY BIG NATIONAL NAME BACK THEN - WHEN THE MUSIC CHANGED, I'D OF PROBABLY WENT COUNTRY.

KB: WHY DIDN'T YOU GO COUNTRY LIKE SO MANY OTHER ARTISTS FROM THE SUN ERA?

BLR: WELL, I DIDN'T WANT TO GO COUNTRY, FOR ONE THING. I'M A GOOD COUNTRY SINGER - I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU. I'M A GOOD COUNTRY SINGER AND A GOOD COUNTRY WRITER. I'M AN HONEST SONGWRITER, I WRITE GOOD STUFF THAT BRINGS TEARS TO YOUR EYES. I'M NOT BRAGGING, I'M JUST SAYING THAT I CAN DO IT. BUT I CAN'T MARKET IT. RIGHT NOW, WHAT I'VE GOT TO DO IN THE SHORT TIME I HAVE LEFT ON THIS EARTH, IS FIND ME A ROAD, GET ON IT, AND STAY ON IT. BLUES IS THE BEST ROAD I CAN BE ON RIGHT NOW. I CAN SELL BLUES. BLUES PEOPLE CAN ACCEPT ME, BECAUSE I'VE BEEN CONSIDERED HALF BLUES ALL MY LIFE. THESE DAYS, I CAN'T SELL COUNTRY - BECAUSE COUNTRY MUSIC DON'T WANT NO 65 YEAR-OLD SINGER. SO, THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T DO IT.

(PART 3 OF THE BILLY LEE RILEY INTERVIEW WILL BE IN BRUTARIAN #38.)







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# FREDDIE STEADY KRC



by JOHN OLIVER

**I**f ever there was a true Renaissance man/jack-of-all-trades of Texas/Austin music, it would have to be Freddie Krc (pronounced "Kerch"), front man of The Shakin' Apostles since the early 90's, a roots rock & roll band that definitely deserves to be more widely heard and appreciated. Freddie's been making music in his native state for over 30 years, including a 20+ year off-and-on stint as Jerry Jeff Walker's drummer, as well as a catalog of studio session work (approximately 88 LP's, including work with Walker, BW Stevenson, Carole King, Wes McGhee, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock, Roger Waters, Ronnie Lane, Roky Erickson, and Ponty Bone, among others) that many pro session hired guns would die for. He was a founder of the Austin-based punk band The Explosives, best known for being

Roky Erickson's backing band during the early 80's, and he has put out solo LP's under his own name in both the UK and Czechoslovakia. He's also produced several albums, most recently for the Texas surf instrumental surf band, 3 Balls of Fire. Born in Houston and raised in Laorte, Texas, Freddie's closely related to members of the Ray Krenek Orchestra, a family polka band that has existed in Texas since the mid-1800's. With such a musical pedigree, it's only natural that he started playing musical instruments at an early age, first as drummer in a rock & roll band in LaPorte at age 10, about the time the British Invasion of America was starting. Shortly after, he also took up the guitar. Originally intending to major in theology in college and then enter the ministry, he instead answered another, stronger calling - as a profession-

al musician. Freddie moved to Austin in 1974, where he has since resided. His first recording gig was backing up BW Stevenson, whose band he joined in 1975. In 1977, he hooked up with Jerry Jeff Walker as his drummer, his longest running musical gig. His first sabbatical from Walker occurred in 1979, when he formed the Explosives in response to the budding new wave/punk scene. The Explosives lasted through the mid-80's, creating their own label (Black Hole Records) and releasing several singles and EP's, including the 12" "Restless Natives" in 1982, the closest they ever got to a full-length LP. As mentioned above, this band is probably best known for being former 13th Floor Elevators singer Roky Erickson's backing band for about 2 and a half years in the late 70's/early 80's.

During the 80's, Freddie spent a great deal of time in the UK, and he recorded his first solo LP, "Freddie Steady's Wild Country - Lucky 7" over there in 1987. While playing in England, he made contacts that led to several trips to his ancestral homeland of the Czech Republic. This eventually resulted in a solo LP he recorded in Czechoslovakia, "When the Wall Came Down" in 1990, on which he played with a Czech backing band.

Throughout all this time, he had also been playing with Jerry Jeff Walker, a gig which he kept off and on until 2000. In 1990, he formed The Shakin' Apostles, which represent the culmination of all of his years of playing country, folk, rock, conjunto, zydeco, and other types of music I'm sure I'm leaving out. He has called the Apostles' music "Electric Western Folk-Rock", which is about as good and accurate description as you're going to get.....assuming you also mention that it's tuneful and full of

instantly memorable hooks. The Apostles have released 4 excellent full-length LP's/CD's to date - "Shakin' Apostles" in 1993 (on ESD Records), "Tucson", a Western folk-rock epic concept album, in 1995 (also on ESD), "Medicine Show" in 1997 (in the UK on Blue Rose Records, in the US on Freddie's Big Tex Records in 1998), and their live tour de force "Too Hot For Snakes" in 1999 (also on Big Tex). The easiest way to describe their music is to list the cover songs they do on the live LP - The 13th Floor Elevators "Levitation", Moby Grape's "Fall On You", Buffalo Springfield's "Rock & Roll Woman", and Gene Clark's "Long Time".....plus Freddie's originals all pretty much sound like they could have been written during the 60's by similar bands. In addition, there's something about Freddie's original songs that brings to mind the Old West....much in the same manner as The Band evoked Midwest Americana (never mind that several of them were Canadian!). The Shakin' Apostles' most recent recordings have been two CD-singles - a Christmas recording of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town", set to the tune of "Sunshine of Your Love" (!), which works surprisingly well, and a tribute to the Cave Stomp shows in NYC last November, titled "Cave Stomp", a rollicking Bo Diddley-type song that mentions all the bands who performed there. The Apostles are also in the process of releasing their 5th full-length CD, again on Freddie's label Big Tex, "Frontier-A-Go-Go". Since the live CD, there have been 2 personnel changes within the band - a new lead guitarist in Bradley Kopp, formerly with Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and Mark Andes (of the original Spirit and Jo Jo Gunne) on bass. This brings the total number of Apostles and former Apostles to about a dozen or so - but it's clearly Freddie's band and Freddie's vision.



**BRUT** - First, Freddie - your last name- it's pronounced "Kerch", correct?

**Freddie Krc (FK)**- Yes, that's right. It's a Czech name.

**BRUT** - Was it shortened a couple of generations ago maybe?

**FK** - No, that's always been the correct spelling. In Czech, there's a funny little accent-type mark over the "c", which means it's pronounced "ch", and r's are like vowels in that language. I've been to the Czech Republic twice, and I also found out that "Krc" is the name of a suburb of Prague.

**BRUT** - Let's start out talking about the Shakin' Apostles. I just recently got your last 2 projects - your Christmas CD single, "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town", to the tune of "Sunshine of Your Love", and your CD single tribute to Cave Stomp in NYC last November. I love both of them! Could you please tell our readers something about them?

**FK** - The Christmas single was something we recorded a couple of years ago at the request of the president of the ESD label (which put out the first 2 Shakin' Apostles CDs) for a Christmas compilation he was planning to put out which never got off the ground.

**BRUT** - It's funny...when you think about it, "Santa Claus Is Coming" is a perfect fit with "Sunshine of Your Love"....it's kinda like putting the lyrics to the theme from "Gilligan's Island" to "Stairway to Heaven"!

**FK** - Exactly! That's why I did it.

**BRUT** - The Cave Stomp single is also perfect, using the Bo Diddley beat, and I believe you mentioned every band that played there those 2 nights.

**FK** - Yes, I did, and I even included that opening band the first night, The Priests from Rochester, who only played one

song.

**BRUT** - Yeah; they were the guys who forgot to bring any spare drumsticks, so they had to quit when their drummer broke one of his sticks. That was so bizarre.....

**FK** - They had won a battle of the bands sponsored by the Wiz. Can you imagine what a terrible van ride back to Rochester that must have been that night? But those 2 nights were both great!

**BRUT** - Yes they were. Billy Childish's new band (Buff Medways), the Downliners Sect, Mark Lindsay, Los Straitjackets with Big Sandy, the Electric Prunes, plus the first ever US show by the Creation! But let's talk about the Apostles' new CD coming out soon. I think you have some new band members since your last album?

**FK** - We have Waco Jack McVey on the drums, Bradley Kopp on lead guitar....

**BRUT** - His name rings a bell with me.....

**FK** - He's played with Jimmie Dale Gilmore.

**BRUT** - Maybe that's it.

**FK** - And we now have Mark Andes on bass, from the original Spirit.

**BRUT** - That's got to be a real coup, getting Mark to join the band!

**FK** - Yes, he's a great guy and great bassist. The name of the new CD is "Frontier-A-Go-Go", and it's being mixed now for a Fall release.

**BRUT** - Are there any cover songs on the new CD, and, if so, what are they?

**FK** - No, although I'm doing 2 songs from friends of mine - "Just Like Jesse James", written by Dale Perkins from Nashville, and "Tin Whistle and a Wooden Drum", by Jimmy Silva.

BRUT - That name I've heard.

FK - Jimmy passed away a couple of years ago. He was from San Francisco, but he spent a lot of time in Seattle. He was really good friends with Scott McCaughey of the Young Fresh Fellows, Minus Five, and REM. He wrote some really great songs. We're also, by the way, putting out a CD EP around the time of the new full-length CD. I'm going to put a couple of covers on the EP - I'm putting a cover of "Catch The Wind" I did with a 12 string guitar in 4/4 tempo, and a cover from Arthur Lee and Love, "A Message To Pretty", on the EP. Those 2 songs will be on there along with "Cave Stomp" and one song from "Frontier-A-Go-Go".

BRUT - Is there any change of direction in the Apostles' sound on the new CD?

FK - I think we're doing a bit more of everything to the extreme. By that, I mean the rockers rock harder, the folk-rock songs are folkier, and I also recorded a long ballad called "Galveston Bay". I'm trying to use more musical colors with this record. You know, Austin has always been known as a songwriter's town. However, I think a lot of the writers here concentrate too much on just the lyrics, at the expense of the music.....and I think you have to use the music to really get the lyrics across effectively. I use the Beatles as an example - they wrote great lyrics and great music, and this is the kind of thing I aspire to, although I'm not there yet.

BRUT - Your band is also known for doing really great covers, which is the reason I asked about covers in the first place. I mean, look at the first 4 songs on your last full-length (the live CD, "Too Hot For Snakes") - you start off with a rocking original, then follow up with a Roky Erickson & 13th Floor Elevators cover, a Moby Grape cover, then a Buffalo Springfield tune. You've got really great taste in music!

FK - Thanks! In a live format, I like doing

covers to show people where I came from. We do Yardbirds songs live and Byrds songs. On the live CD, I did the Gene Clark song "Long Time". Gene Clark was such a master of melancholy, the way he wrote and sang. That particular song was never done by Gene or the Byrds. I first heard of it on an album by the Rose Garden.

BRUT - They were like one-hit wonders, correct. I remember their one hit, "Last Plane to London".

FK - Yes, that was them!

BRUT - What I find a bit funny is that several musicians have left DC to move to Austin, and they were primarily known as hot pickers, not songwriters. I thinking of High Noon and Evan Johns.

FK - Everybody in Austin took to and loved Evan. He played on one of my old records - a one-off single I did under Freddie Steady's Wild Country. The last I heard, he was living in Canada.

BRUT -The last time I saw Evan, he was playing at the Twist & Shout in Wayne Hancock's band. He looked terrible, but I've heard he's cleaned up his act since then.

FK - Evan put together a really good backing band for Roy Loney when he hit Austin. Hunt Sales was the drummer. (NOTE: Soupy's son, formerly of Iggy Pop's band)

BRUT - We were talking about Scott McCaughey and the Young Fresh Fellows earlier. Most of them are in Roy's Seattle band. It's funny - he has a NYC band and a Seattle band, but he hardly ever plays in San Francisco anymore.

FK - I saw Roy in SF in late '96 when I was playing an acoustic tour with Mike Wilhelm, who, of course, was in the Charlatans and the Flamin Groovies. We played at a club called the Paradise, and Roy got up on stage and sang with us.

He's a great guy!

**BRUT** - Yes, he is. I just wish some label would put out his latest LP he did with the Long Shots, his Seattle band.

**FK** - I have the last one he did with them, and I love it!

**BRUT** - You just mentioned an acoustic tour with Mike Wilhelm, who was in the original Charlatans, then Loose Gravel and the Flamin' Groovies. How did that come about? I remember you dedicated your 2nd album "Tucson" to the Charlatans.

**FK** - The Shakin' Apostles toured the West Coast in '94, and while we were out there, I remember reading a quote from one of the Charlatans, I think it was George Hunter, who mentioned that the lyrics to their songs never made any sort of a reference to a time frame. For example, they never mentioned a TV or a telephone, so their songs could have been from any point in history. I thought that was cool, and I decided to try writing in that style. "Tucson" started out as a 4 song EP that only goes up to the point in the story where Sonny winds up in Mexico, but I had written the complete short story, the one that's included in the CD booklet. I submitted both the EP and the short story to the head of ESD records, and he asked me to go ahead and finish a full LP that covers the entire story....so I did. Now - how the tour came about with Mike Wilhelm - he sat in with us when we played the Paradise Lounge in San Francisco in '94, that's how I met him. A couple of years later, I was going back to SF, and I asked Jud Cost (Sundazed Records) if he knew how I could get in touch with Mike. Jud had his number, and we wound up getting together and doing an acoustic tour in November '96. I mentioned earlier that Roy Loney sat in with us when we played the Paradise....so did Sal Valentino (Beau Brummels' singer). We played a bunch of

gigs, all out West.

**BRUT** - You also mentioned to me that you actually played drums with the Charlatans at a show at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. What's the story on that?

**FK** - At the end of the acoustic tour with Mike, he gave me a CD of the old Charlatans material - Big Beat Records had just reissued a lot of their stuff on an import CD. I played it when I got home, and the next



Freddie Krc !

time I talked with Mike, I told him - "Hey, if the Charlatans ever get back together again, and Dan (Hicks) doesn't want to play the drums, I'd love to do it!" He called me in August ('97) and asked "Did you mean that?" He told me they were playing a gig at the R&R Hall of Fame in Cleveland in October, and that Dan Hicks would rather not play drums if possible. I ended up going out West in September and rehearsing their songs with Dan. I told him that I read music, so he basically



grilled me like a tuna, put me through my paces to see what I knew. I played the gig with them. Mike Ferguson passed away awhile back, so they used Austin DeLeone (formerly with Commander Cody among others) to take his place. It was all of the original Charlatans except Mike Ferguson, along with Austin and me. It was a great gig and I really enjoyed myself!

**BRUT** - Did you play just Charlatans tunes, or did Dan do any of his solo stuff?

**FK** - It was a combination.

**BRUT** - That must have been really cool, playing with the first San Francisco R&R band, at least as far as the 60's/Beatles-era. Question - Speaking of playing the drums, you were with Jerry Jeff Walker on drums for one Hell of a long time. Do you still play with him?

**FK** - No, I don't. I played with Jerry Jeff off and on, starting in about '77, up until a little over a year ago. I started with him when I was 22-23 years old, and this was about the time that punk rock was really hitting the scene in a big way. This resurgence in rock & roll really excited me, and I formed the Explosives around that time.

**BRUT** - Yeah, the punk scene in the late 70's and early 80's was almost like the British Invasion all over again for me.

**FK** - I was at a dinner recently, and the people there were talking about the great music of the 80's, and they were talking about bands like Duran Duran....and I had to bite my tongue! That kind of music turned me off so much by the late 80's that I was into and playing Mexican/conjunto music by the end of the Explosives.

**BRUT** - The Explosives never put out a real full-length album, no?

**FK** - No, but we started out own label, Black Hole Records. My good friend Tom Ordon, who managed the band the

Nervebreakers....and he's also the one who came up with the name "Frontier-A-Go-Go"....showed us how to start our own label, do the distribution, and everything else. We put out two 7" Eps and one 7" single. Then, we started dealing with Stu Cook (formerly of Creedence Clearwater Revival), and we did the 8 song 12", "Restless Natives".

**BRUT** - Any reason for putting the instrumental "Headhunter" on it, since you already had released that on a 45?

**FK** - Actually, that song got a lot of air play throughout the world. It was very popular in the Bay area, and it made a lot of the DJ lists they used to print in NY Rocker magazine.

**BRUT** - Until you were kind enough to send me your old EP's and singles, all I had was your 12" and the early "Live At Raoul's" comp cuts of yours. With the 45s and EP's, it's a lot easier to see the evolution of the Explosives as a band. Question - Obviously, you guys were really professional musicians who could sing and play. In addition, you also used real professionals to supplement your sound, like Kim Wilson (Fabulous Thunderbirds) on harp on the 12". Did you catch a lot of crap from the other punk bands?

**FK** - Yes, and I found it both amusing and bothersome. I stopped playing with Jerry Jeff Walker, one of the best paying gigs in Austin at the time, to form this band. I lost both my wife and house over this decision...and then, to hear "the Explosives are just posing"...that was irritating! We used tour a lot on the West Coast, and we were treated differently there than at home. The Austin punk scene was like a high school clique. Austin's a small town. They liked us a people OK, but then felt threatened when we showed up for gigs with a real PA, and we could actually play. In LA, for example, we'd play with X. John Doe and Billy Zoom were both real musicians, who had played in country bands prior to X. We

could relate more to them. We felt more kinship with bands like X and some of the slicker pop bands like the Plimsouls - another band who could really play. And I don't want to alienate LA, but there were more cool bands in SF, I thought - bands where they were playing because they really loved the music, not to get rich and famous. There were the Lloyds, No Sisters, and the Chrome Dinettes (later Jellyfish). The Explosives were offered major record deals several times which we turned down when we found out the labels wanted to turn us into another Knack.

BRUT - Like I mentioned earlier, with all of the Explosives records, one can see a definite evolution. All three of you sang. While it looks like you started out writing as a team, at least you & Cam King, by "Restless Natives", the 3 of you were writing separately. I assume you sang lead on your own songs?

FK - Yes, that's pretty much how it worked out. But you know, the three of us are still close, we still talk to this day. Waller Collie lives in Dallas, and Cam in Nashville. Whenever Cam's in town, he sits in with the Shakin' Apostles. He also played on some of the tracks on the first 3 Apostles' CDs. Also, Cam and I just transferred about 30-40 unreleased Explosives songs, as well as several live shows, from analog to digital format, and we're shopping for a label to release all of this stuff.

BRUT - That would be great if you could get that stuff released!

FK - That was a magical time and a magical band...they were the first professional band I was in, as opposed to being just a sideman, and I thought all bands were like that...which was a rude awakening for me later!

BRUT - You started out as a drummer, I assume?

FK - Yes, I played in my first rock & roll band as a drummer when I was about 10.

I started playing the guitar at around 12. I'm very well schooled and educated as a drummer - I can read charts, like I mentioned earlier. On guitar, I'm totally self taught. I think playing the drums helped me as a guitarist, and vice versa.

BRUT - Did you ever have any trouble drumming and singing at the same time?

FK - No, because I really started doing both at about the same time, when I was 10 or so. It just came naturally to me.

BRUT - You see so few singing drummers in bands.

FK - Well, with the Explosives, the three of us lined up across the stage - the drums weren't in the background. I think that might have made it a little easier for the audiences to accept a drummer that sang.

BRUT - You mentioned Stu Cook earlier. Was he your initial connection to Roky Erickson? (NOTE: Cook produced one of Erickson's early solo LPs.)

FK - No, actually my friend Tom Ordon knew Roky's manager, and he heard that Roky was in the process of relocating from the West Coast to Austin, this was in 1979. He called me and mentioned that Roky was coming, and he'd need a good band to play with him in Austin. Roky Erickson had been a huge idol of mine since the 60's when the 13th Floor Elevators were playing in Austin, so we jumped at this chance. The Explosives had just started in June 1979, and we started playing with Roky in July. We played out a lot more than he did, but we were his backing band whenever he played out for about 2 and a half years or so.

BRUT - I bet you've really got some good road stories involving him!

FK - Well, I try to explain to people, Roky's schizophrenic but he's always had a really good sense of humor that a lot of people don't see....and he uses that sense of humor to gauge people, to see what

of humor to gauge people, to see what kind of a reaction he can get. For instance, we were playing at a club called Skip Willie's in San Antonio one time. We arrived there in the afternoon, and the club manager's falling all over himself telling Roky how he's always been such a huge fan since '66, and how this such a great honor to have him play at his club. Roky looked at him, smiled, and said "I'm gonna see you die tonight, brother!", and the guy went white. Now, this was a line from "The Creature With the Atom Brain", mind you. Roky was always doing this kind of thing to people to get a take on them. Another time, we're playing in Houston, and a woman comes backstage with a 12 year old girl that she claims is Roky's daughter...and he's never met the little girl, he knows nothing about this. So here's this first time ever meeting between a father and daughter, and this blew the band away - we weren't sure what to say. After they leave, Roky comes up to me and says - "Fred, I know you think I'm a bad guy....but I've got the heart of a young boy. I keep it in a jar under my bed!" We played with Roky for 2 and a half years, and had for the most part a great time. He had just undergone a drug-stabilizing treatment just before we started playing together, and he was in great shape - he was playing and singing great, and he'd come over for regular rehearsals with us. As the medication started to wear off, though, he got really dark, and it got very hard to play with him. It was a crucial time in our careers - we were on a big tour in the Bay area, opening for the Psychedelic Furs when the medication started wearing off. It was very sad for me, as he was one of my biggest idols.

BRUT - We had a lot of trouble trying to find the 13th Floor Elevators' records back here on the East Coast. They were on that small label out of Houston, International Artists, and they weren't widely distributed at all.

FK - The president of that label, Leland

Rogers, who's Kenny Rogers' brother, by the way, moved to LaPort, my hometown, about the time the first Elevators' LP came out. His son Danny, who was a year older than me, also played the drums. I was in the 7th grade at the time, playing drums in one of only 2 rock & roll bands in LaPort - Danny was the drummer in the other band. So I was aware of the 13th Floor Elevators really early.

BRUT - Were they from Houston?

FK - No, they were Austin-based. Roky was in an Austin band called the Spades prior to the Elevators. The Spades did the first recording of "You're Gonna Miss Me", which is impossible to find nowadays. The Elevators' rhythm section earlier played in a band called the Lingsmen. Tommy Hall, the jug player, was a student at UT, studying philosophy, religion, and mind-altering drugs, and not necessarily in that order.....and Tommy put the band together, picking and choosing the best players from other local bands.

BRUT - Do you still keep in touch with Roky?

FK - I do, but I haven't talked with him in a couple of years. He lives in Dell Valley, a small town between Austin and Houston. Here's an interesting story - The last time I saw him was in 1999, at a bar-beque/release party in Austin for that book of Roky's poetry that Henry Rollins put out. Two days before that party, I drove from Austin to Houston to get my passport renewed. While going through Dell Valley, I was thinking about Roky, wondering where he was and what he was doing. On the way back, when I again passed through that town, I thought about Roky again. Two days later, I see him at the party, and he says - "you were in Dell Valley the other day, weren't you. I know you were there."

BRUT - Man! Didn't that freak you out?

FK - Well, Peter Lewis (Moby Grape) and I



are buddies, and we've swapped lots of stories about Roky and Skip Spence. Peter has a theory - that those two live (or in Skip's case, lived) on an entirely different plane than the rest of us, and just because I didn't see Roky that day, that doesn't mean he didn't see me - never mind that I was driving through there doing 80 mph! Peter's also got some hair-raising stories about taking Skippy to a monastery for an exorcism. By the way, I have a new song about Skippy on the new CD - "Child of the Universe".

**BRUT** - As far as I'm concerned, Skip will never really be appreciated as he should be. The "More Oar" tribute that Bob Irwin did a couple of years ago was really good, though. Speaking of tribute albums - I was looking for my copy of the Roky tribute, "Where the Pyramid Meets the Eye" the other night, but I couldn't find it. Did you play on it at all?

**FK** - No, I didn't, but I think I was spending a lot of time in the UK when they did that one. I know the guy who put it together, Bill Bentley. He was a former drummer from Austin who moved to LA, where he first worked for the LA Weekly, then Slash Records. When Slash got bought by Warner Brothers, Bill started working there. That's how he got the clout to put out that tribute album.

**BRUT** - Doug Sahm's presence was all over that album. I assume you remember him from the 60's?

**FK** - Oh sure, the very first live concert I ever went to at age 10 was to see the Sir Douglas Quintet.

**BRUT** - Did they get huge in Texas, or did that happen after they moved to the Bay area?

**FK** - They were very big in Texas first. You know, Austin, while it's a liberal haven in a very conservative, redneck state, has always been a small town. People with long hair were constantly threatened in

the 60's. That's one of the main reasons that Doug Sahm & co. moved, and it's also probably what broke up the 13th Floor Elevators - the police wouldn't leave them alone. Getting back to the Roky tribute, they could have made it a 2 or 3 disk set easily, because I don't know of any Texas band who wasn't influenced by the Elevators. They were arguably the first psychedelic band. ZZ Top's earlier incarnation, the Moving Sidewalks, they were heavily influenced by Roky and the Elevators.

**BRUT** - Speaking of ZZ Top and the Moving Sidewalks, I understand Gearhead magazine is putting on a Gearfest show in Austin later this year, and there's supposed to be a Moving Sidewalks reunion headlining one of the nights.

**FK** - I hope so! That would be great! I know one of the guys in the Moving Sidewalks has been working for the ZZ Top organization for years, so they could get them all together pretty easily.

**BRUT** - Let's talk about some of your discography for a few minutes. How did you end up playing on a Carole King LP?

**FK** - She was living in Idaho, and she was married to a guy who committed suicide (ED. NOTE: Rick Evers, I think, of a drug overdose). Before he died, he heard and really liked a Jerry Jeff Walker LP, and he recommended to Carole that she record with his band.

**BRUT** - Was that the Lost Gonzo Band?

**FK** - No, they quit backing Jerry Jeff in 1976, and went off as a separate act. Jerry Jeff put together a new band in 1977. Prior to that, I had been drumming with B.W. Stevenson, who had a couple of big hits with "My Maria" and "Shambala".....although Three Dog Night had a much bigger hit with the latter, even though it was BW's song. When I joined Jerry Jeff's band, that's when I met Dave Perkins, who I mentioned earlier.

Dave's got a recording studio in Nashville now, which I used for part of "Frontier-A-Go-Go". I also met Reece Wynans in Jerry Jeff's new band. He became famous for playing keyboards with Stevie Ray Vaughan. I also used Reece on the new CD, as well as Rusty Young on dobro on a cut.

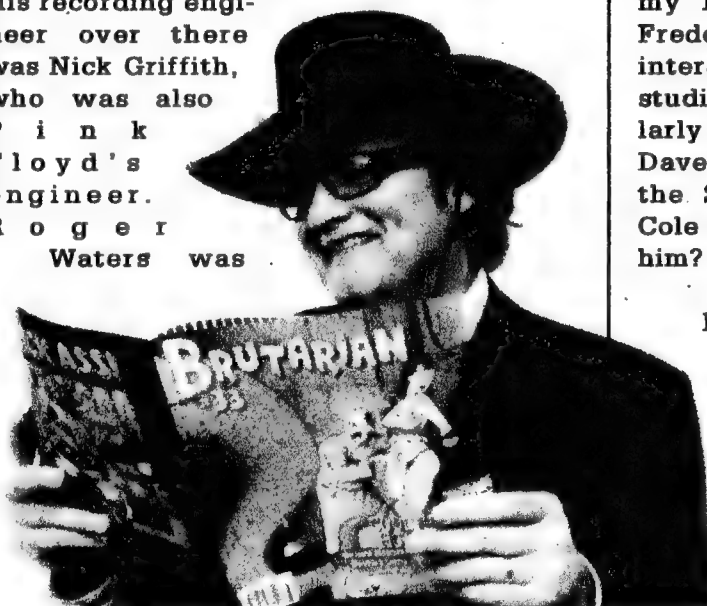
**BRUT** - From Poco? Wow! I also have to ask a question about another LP you played on that struck me as strange....

**FK** - Oh, the Roger Waters one? How did a Texas hillbilly wind up playing with the guy from Pink Floyd?

**BRUT** - Well, I wasn't gonna say it that way, but now that you mention it.....

**FK** - My best friend Wes McGhee is a songwriter who moved from England to Austin in 1983. He first came over to cut an album with a bunch of Texas musicians whom he had only heard on records before - some of Joe Ely's band members and me. After that first LP, "Landing Light", I wound up touring in the UK with him, and we ended up going back and forth across the Atlantic several times.

His recording engineer over there was Nick Griffith, who was also  
P i n k  
F l o y d ' s  
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W a t e r s   w a s



*Freddie KRC*

working on a soundtrack for an animated film called "When the Wind Blows". He was the musical director for this soundtrack, and he needed someone to do some military march-style drumming. Now this was 1986, when everybody was using drum machines, it seemed. Roger couldn't find a sample of the kind of drumming he wanted, and he couldn't find a real live drummer who could play this way. Nick suggested letting me have a go at it, so I did it. After that, Roger used me for a couple of other tracks as well. He was a really nice, regular guy, who came down to the pub with us for drinks after the recording session. We've kept in touch since then - the last time he toured the US, he called me up to invite my wife and me to his show. That film, by the way, won several awards over in Europe. It was an animated black comedy about nuclear war, and the soundtrack also had songs by David Bowie, Squeeze and Paul Hardcastle - all these Brits and me (laughs).

**BRUT** - I saw in your discography that you cut quite a few albums with Wes McGhee. I just assumed he was one of those unsung, unheard-of Austin songwriters.

**FK** - No, he's British, and he's a tremendous singer and songwriter. He produced my 1987 solo LP I recorded in the UK, Freddie Steady's Wild Country. It was an interesting session. Wes found me a little studio in Croydon, which is not a particularly ritzy part of London, and we used Dave Goodman as our engineer. He was the Sex Pistols' engineer. We used B.J. Cole on the record. Do you remember him?

**BRUT** - He was in the band Cochise, and I believe he was the #1 pedal steel player in the UK for awhile....

**FK** - Wow, I'm impressed! He's a friend of mine. He played with Elton John on "Tiny Dancer", and he's now playing with Sting. I saw him a couple of years ago in New York

playing with John Cale. It was a really great show!

**BRUT** - John Cale with a pedal steel player? How bizarre!

**FK** - Yeah, it sounds strange, but it sounded great.

**BRUT** - I just saw Roy Wood in NYC a couple of weeks ago. Talk about strange! It was in the Village Underground, which has this really tiny stage that's only about a foot higher than the floor. Wood played with a 12 piece band, including 8 horns, and 9 of the band were young ladies. He rearranged all of his old Move songs like "Blackberry Way", "Fire Brigade" and "I Can Hear the Grass Grow", to showcase this huge horn section.

**FK** - I would have loved to have seen that! There are still a lot of Move fans in Austin.

**BRUT** - What's funny- their original lead singer Carl Wayne just joined the Hollies over in England. That whole scene with those old 60's bands who still play the cabaret circuit - the Searchers (NOTE: 2 versions - the John McNally/Frank Allen one and Mike Pender's Searchers), Hollies, Gerry & the Pacemakers, Herman's Hermits, the Animals and so on - the whole scene seems so incestuous. I think that's what Roy Wood's doing nowadays - he's like an oldies act over there. I also understand he's forming a new band that's going to play salsa music - I read a recent interview where he said that his main musical interest now is in writing and arranging horn charts, and he likes the horns in salsa music.

**FK** - Pretty wild!

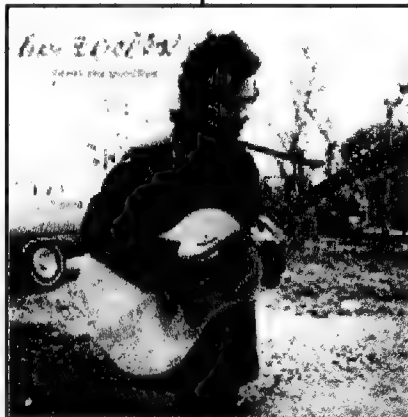
**BRUT** - Another LP on your discography that has me curious - your LP with Ronnie Lane of the Small Faces. How did that come about?

**FK** - When I got back from England in '86, I started hanging out with JD Foster, who had been Dwight Yoakum's bass player, but he was playing with the True Believers at that point, Alejandro Escovedo's band. JD's girlfriend was taking care of Ronnie, who was in a wheelchair at the time, due to his battle with MS. We got together a group of musicians to back Ronnie, who could still sing - he'd be seated on a stool on stage. We had RC Banks, a great accordion player and songwriter, Suzie Voelz from Poi Dog Pondering, Alejandro, JD, and me, among others. We played together off and on for about a year. We performed a lot of his songs from the Faces days and his Slim Chance band days. He was getting weaker, but he still gave it his all. His songs were so melancholy.

**BRUT** - We've been talking about Jerry Jeff Walker off and on. My first exposure to him was in that NY rock band Circus Maximus back in the 60's.

**FK** - I remember them well - they were like a jazzy version of the Lovin Spoonful. Their keyboard player Bob Bruno, who I know - he was like the jazz component, and Jerry Jeff was the folk part of their sound. There was a song on their debut album that got quite a lot of radio air play in Texas - one of Bob Bruno's songs, "The Wind".

**BRUT** - I remember that - it was about 8 minutes long. You know, that debut album of theirs may be my all-time favorite LP that Jerry Jeff played on, including his solo stuff.



*Roky Erickson*



**FK** - They were a very talented band. Gary White, their bassist, he wrote that song that Linda Ronstadt had a hit with, "Long Long Time". He lives in LA now. Bob Bruno lives near DC. You should look him up sometime.

**BRUT** - Is Jerry Jeff originally from New York?

**FK** - Yes, he's from a small town near Cooperstown in upstate NY, called Oneonta. After Circus Maximus' 2nd LP, "Neverland Revisited", he left the band and went solo. He hitchhiked around the country for awhile before settling down in Austin in 1972 or so.

**BRUT** - Personally, while I really like his early solo stuff, and I admit he's a great performer and songwriter, I'm not too crazy about most of the stuff he's done over the last 10 years or so. To me, he's kinda mellowed out, and turned into a Texas version of Jimmy Buffett. On the other hand, he's pushing 60 now, so.....

**FK** - Well, I tend to agree with your assessment, but you know, Dylan's still kicking ass, and he's past 60 now.

**BRUT** - Have you seen his recently? His band just kills....I think they're very bit as good as when the Band was backing him.

**FK** - Yeah, his band is great. Tony Garnier, his bass player and band leader, he lived in Austin for a few years, when he was playing with Asleep at the Wheel.

**BRUT** - I remember seeing him with Robert Gordon, the rockabilly singer from DC, several times in the late 70's and early 80's.

**FK** - When he left Asleep at the Wheel, he moved to NY, and that's when he started playing with Gordon.

**BRUT** - Speaking of Gordon, I assume you saw Danny Gatton?

**FK** - Oh yes! I first saw Danny around '76 or so. I was with BW Stevenson, and we were playing the old Cellar Door there on M Street in Georgetown. Danny and the Fat Boys were playing right across the street from us. Now, I had heard about him in Austin already. What a fantastic player.

**BRUT** - And you know, he used to tell people that he never played an original lick in his life.....however, everything he ever heard was stored in his head, and he could recall anything at anytime. There was a story about his father taking him for his first guitar lesson with Sophocles Papas, who was the eminent classical guitar teacher in DC. Danny was about 8 or 10 years old at the time. The old man gave Danny one lesson, and told his father - "I can't teach your boy anything. It appears he can play anything he hears."

**FK** - Yeah, he was truly amazing.

**BRUT** - Question - Are there any new bands on the Austin scene whom we'll be hearing about in the future?

**FK** - That's a good question. I haven't heard anybody here lately who's really knocked me out. I'll tell you the truth, though, and it bothers me somewhat. The most popular acts in Austin nowadays seem to be those who do nothing but ape other acts. For example, two of the most popular acts here do, to my way of thinking, great impersonations of Buck Owens and the Buckaroos, and Hank Williams.

**BRUT** - I assume you mean the Derailers and Wayne Hancock.

**FK** - You guessed them! And I love both Buck Owens and Hank Williams to death, but frankly, I've heard both of those acts already. I'd personally much rather hear an original band or singer who absorbs their roots (like Buck and/or Hank) and tries to stretch it or add something to the music to make it their own. This, to me, is

what Austin's always been about. What initially drew me to move to Austin when I was starting out my musical career, instead of, let's say moving to LA, was the attitude of musicians like Jerry Jeff and Willie Nelson there. They were taking traditional music and extending it, making it their own. Hell, I could put on a big hat and do well known country & western covers if I wanted to.....

BRUT - Frankly, I've seen the Derailers several times live, and I love them, but yeah, you're right - they're not the most original band.

FK - And they're not even from Texas or Bakersfield in the first place, they're from Seattle. One thing about the Derailers that irritated me - they were interviewed by John Einarson for his recent book on country rock music (*ED.NOTE: "Desperados"*), and they were quoted as saying something like - "unlike Gram Parsons, we're really going back to our roots." And my response would be - "Yeah, but unlike Gram Parsons, you're not trying to do anything original!"

BRUT - I definitely sense this is what you're trying to do with the Shakin' Apostles - absorb all of your roots and influences and create an amalgamation that's your own vision. You've got rock & roll, rockabilly, country & western, folk-rock with the electric 12 strings, and so on....

FK - Exactly! And between you and me, this isn't the most popular, and certainly not the most commercial thing I could do in Austin nowadays....but it's what I want to do. I made this choice because I love this kind of music and I believe in it. And I mean, I could certainly put on a hat and do the country trip. I've lived in Texas my whole life, and I've ridden horses....I've lived this wild west thing.

BRUT - Since making a CD the other night of all Explosives commercially-released recordings, I've noticed - your singing voice now uses a much wider range, including a

lower register than you used with the Explosives. Does the new (Shakin' Apostles) material lend itself more to this?

FK - No, actually, after the Explosives, I took voice lessons, and the teacher showed me that I had this much lower range than I had previously used.

BRUT - To me, you've got the perfect singing voice where you could add a little slapback echo, and you'd sound great singing rockabilly.

FK - Funny you should say that, because I do several old rockabilly songs in my live set. I'm a huge Eddie Cochran and Johnny Burnette fan.

BRUT - I assume you're a Ronnie Dawson fan?

FK - I love Ronnie Dawson, I've seen him many times live.

BRUT - At the risk of sounding immodest, we did a very good interview with Ronnie a couple of years ago.

FK - I'd love to get a copy of that! The last time I saw Ronnie was at the DNA in San Francisco. I was in the area for a tribute to Jimmy Silva on radio station KFJC - it's closer to San Jose than San Francisco. Jimmy had just died, and a bunch of us - the Young Fresh Fellows guys and Sal Valention and me - we did a show at the radio station. Ronnie happened to be playing in San Francisco that week, so I went and saw him.

BRUT - Question - I assume you've been able to make a living your entire adult life as a musician? If so, you're one of the luckiest people I know - to be able to support yourself solely through doing something you love to do.

FK - Yes, I have, and you know, I have never taken it for granted. I'm very grateful and very thankful for being able to do so. I've never been afraid to take chances

regarding my career either. Leaving Jerry Jeff Walker for the Explosives was a big gamble, and leaving him again a year and a half ago was another one. I've been juggling the Shakin' Apostles for the last 10 years, doing gigs whenever I wasn't playing with Jerry Jeff, and now I finally have time to concentrate on them. While it may not be, for the time being, as financially rewarding, I'm so much happier now. I've found the time to produce several acts. I just produced an album by the surf instrumental band, 3 Balls of Fire, and I'm in the process of producing an album by the band Denim, who I played with on their first album back in 1976 (on Epic). Epic dropped them and their next label ABC made them change their name to Traveler, but that didn't work out very well. This is the original band from the 70's back together again.

BRUT - You know, if there's one thing I learned from last year's Cave Stomp and other shows like that, there are so many old bands from the 60's and 70's who still have that magic when they reunite and play.

FK - That's very true. Mark Lindsay and the Electric Prunes, the Downliners Sect and Creation were all fabulous...they all sounded as good as ever. Your last issue, by the way, had the interview with Wanda Jackson. She's still great - she had just recorded a record in Czechoslovakia right before I did my solo LP there ("When the Wall Came Down", on the Multisonic label ).

BRUT - How did that record come about?

FK - I sent these Czech musicians I knew a bunch of songs, and asked them to pick which ones they'd like to record. My wife and I went over there for about a month in 1990. The songs are mostly country oriented, those are the ones they picked, although they also wanted a rocker or two...they thought "Devil's Hand" sounded like the Rolling Stones, so they picked that one. I recorded with a bunch of wonderful Czech musicians. We also recorded

a song they wrote about me being of Czech descent and coming over there to play and record with them. This was about 6 months after the revolution there, and my wife and I had the worst time trying to find fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as bottled water. The Czechs they eat mostly meat and potatoes, really heavy food, which isn't what we're used to. When I went back there the second time, in '97, to tour there, I noticed it was so much easier to find produce and water. Things had really improved for them over that 7 year period.

BRUT - You're from an old polka band family, correct?

FK - Yes, the Ray Krenek Orchestra has been around in Texas since 1863. My father's mother, Annie Krenek, she played an upright bass. The band still plays today. They made records for RCA in the 40's. My great Uncle Ed made hammered dulcimers, one of which is in the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. He played with the band until he was over 90.

BRUT - Polks music is the basis for so much modern music. You can trace zydeco, conjunto, disco, R&B, beach music, and other types.....

FK - That's very true. Mexican conjunto music is basically Mexican music played on German polka instruments. Zydeco is a cross between R&B and polka, played on cajun instruments. We were talking about Doug Sahm earlier. Doug understood and could play all of these different kinds of music - blues, R&B, rock & roll, conjunto, polkas, tejano. Remember, he played in the Texas Tornados, who combined all of those types of music. Doug heard all of these types of music while growing up in Texas....as did I. We were exposed to all of these different variations. When I got back from Europe in '86, I remember taking my car to a car wash. While I was waiting, I noticed 4 cars sitting there, all with their radios blasting - and I heard country coming from one, blues from

**BRUT** - Do you have one particular favorite type of music...or does it depend on what you're playing at the moment?

**FK** - Well, soul music is the only music I ever dance to.

**BRUT** - Whatever happened to soul music? Wilson Pickett, who still has The Voice, made a comeback album a couple of years ago, but the most of the songs weren't very good.

**FK** - Yes, it's a shame, what's happened to soul music. We still have WC Clark here in Austin. He's a blues singer, but he also does a lot of soul songs live.

**BRUT** - Well, I'm running out of questions for you. How have sales been for the Shakin' Apostles CDs?

**FK** - Good! Our earlier CDs on the ESD label sold better than the more recent ones, but ESD did a better job in the publicity department.

**BRUT** - Do you sell better over here or in

Europe? I ask because it just seems like the European record/CD-buying public has better taste in music.

**FK** - I'd agree with you there. Our sales are pretty good everywhere. Some of the older stuff was on the Blue Rose label in Germany. The Blue Rose stuff has sold fairly consistently.

**BRUT** - Good luck on the new CD! It's been great talking with you!

**FK** - Thanks! My pleasure. I'll keep in touch regarding when we're going to play DC.

**EPILOGUE:** I've since received an advance copy of "Frontier-A-Go-Go", and it's great! I also talked with Freddie on September 4th, and he mentioned that he had just seen Roky Erickson, who's just moved back to Austin from Pittsburgh, where his younger brother had been taking care of him. Roky was lucid and in good spirits (and medicated).

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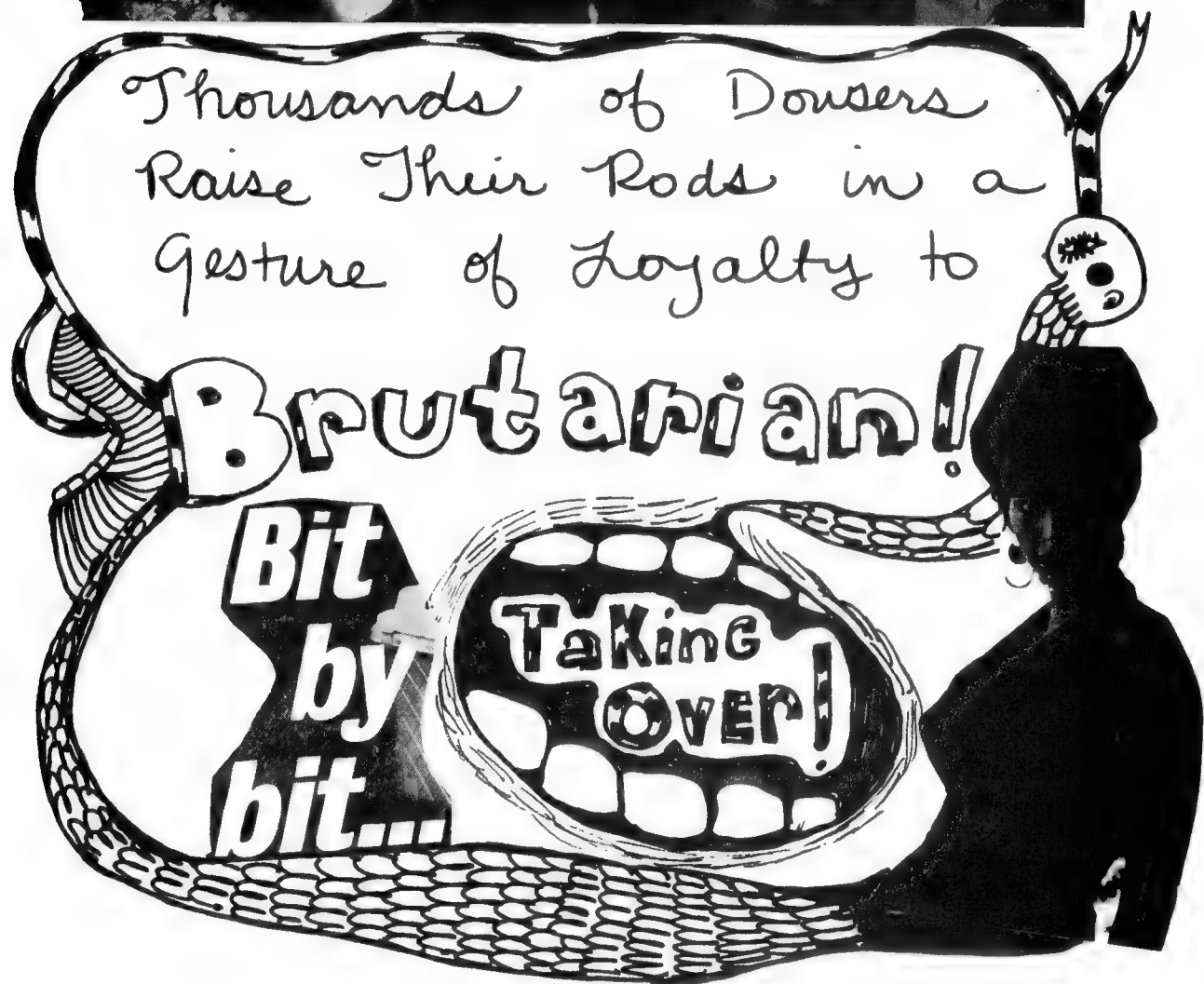


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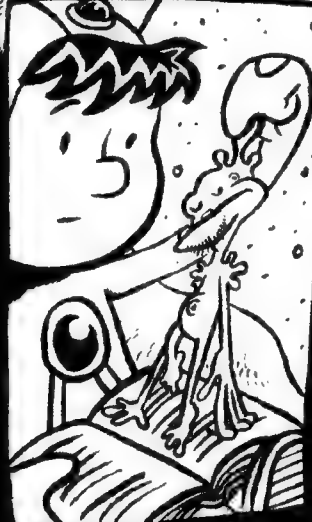
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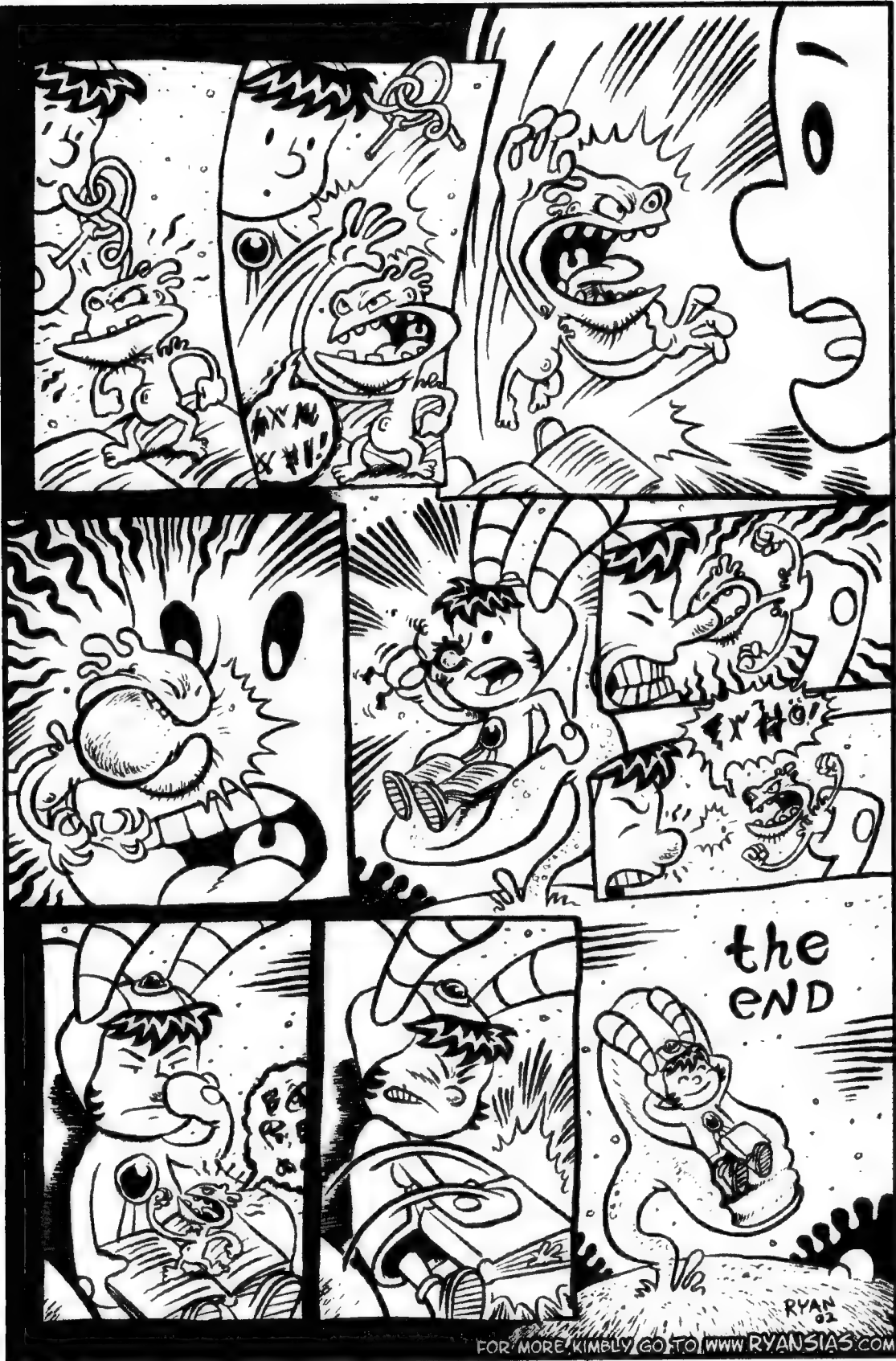


Silent

# Kimby

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## Grappling with Poffo:

*A Second Look at an Unsung Poet* by Dan Aibel

The style is derivative, the word choice bland, and there is little thematic breadth. Thinly-sketched characters are briefly conjured and then dropped. At times even the extravagantly simple, singsong rhyming structure devolves into chaos. So it is no wonder that readers and critics blithely dismissed World Wrestling Federation star ("Leaping") Lanny Poffo's 1988 poetry collection *WRESTLING WITH RHYME* when it first arrived. And yet, more than a decade after its release, a careful reading of Poffo's debut reveals it to be a seminal work, worthy of our attention. *RHYME* is a volume not without flaws, it is true. But the tenacious eloquence at its core—the plainspoken muscularity of Poffo's verse—signals the arrival of an important new poetic voice. And it is high time for that voice to be heard.

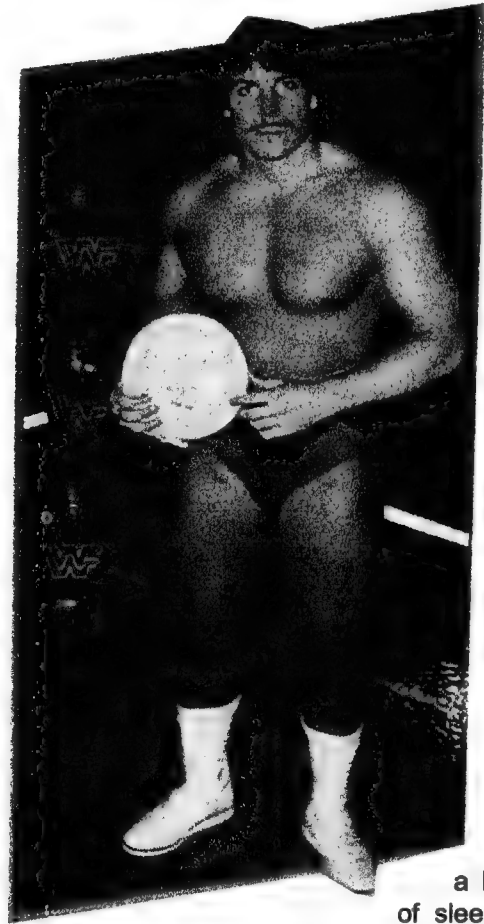
*RHYME* opens with "Before the Bell," a crude sixteen-line trifle. Poffo announces:

*Before this wrestling match begins  
I have some words to say  
To fans from every nation  
And throughout the USA*

Even the sympathetic reader is likely to chafe at this opening gambit. Poffo's blunt, declaratory approach lacks subtlety and his phrasing is both rigid and unimaginative.

*It wasn't very long ago  
I had a ringside seat  
My father was a champion  
Who seldom knew defeat*

Here the poem maneuvers into slightly more interesting territory. But Poffo clings as closely to a simple, predictable cadence as his bathing suitcumwrestling trunks cling to his well-proportioned hips. Inevitably, this uniformity numbs, rather than engages the reader. And so already, only two verses into the collection, it is all too easy to succumb to



a kind of sleeper-hold submission-to conclude that *RHYME* is a work barren of value, without depth or emotional resonance. The lay reader can be forgiven for setting it aside almost reflexively.

But to discard *RHYME* at such an early stage is to forego staggering literary and intellectual rewards. It is to pass up nothing less than a window into the world of a unique, mustachioed young writer still in the process of discovering his poetic sensibility.

Indeed, given a fair hearing, *RHYME* reveals itself to be a collection that is at once witty and solemn, intimate and epic; one which addresses topics as wide-ranging as faith, legacy and "Hulkamania"; one which manages to work in meaningful references to Robert Penn Warren, James Madison and George (the "Animal") Steele.

The task of interpreting and assessing *RHYME* requires not so much a line-by-line analysis as an openness to the power of the collection as a whole. Indeed, we must be willing to



overlook missteps like the too-clever "Ode to Larry 'Bud' Mellman," the cryptic "Uncle Elmer's Wedding," and the earnest but ultimately saccharine "Breaking the Ice for Big Brothers," to get at the self-examination which is Poffo's true focus.

Namely, through the collection's better poems--the scathing "Jimmy Hart," ("He's the scratching fingernails / on the blackboard of our lives"), the playful "Who's Been Stealing the Cardboard Hulksters?" and a minor masterpiece, "The Handshake Heard 'Round the World"--a portrait of Poffo develops: He is Italian. He is Jewish. He comes from a loving wrestling family. His father, Angelo, holds a world record for consecutive sit-ups. He is charitable and loyal, but also vulnerable to pangs of vengefulness and hate.

He emerges, in short, as a complex, conflicted, pectorally-blessed, frisbee-wielding individual, aware of his shortcomings, but not resigned to them.

Poffo's poems are littered with allusions to faith and family, to neighborliness and friendship, and to God. In "What's Behind the Smile" he notes, "I can feel His love around me" and in "Deliverance," he maintains, "The Holy Spirit came to me and filled me with such power."

Still, elsewhere, as in "Hillbilly Jim" he appears to set aside his religious scruples, musing:

*Pro Wrestling is a battlefield  
and danger signs our checks  
For what they've done to Big Jim's leg  
I hope he breaks their necks.*

The verse raises a question as fundamental as it is obvious: How does one reconcile the violence that defines the wrestling lifestyle with the spiritual teachings Poffo seems determined to follow?

There is no simple, pat reply available, of course. Yet it is in grappling with this question, and in formulating his answer, that Poffo stakes out his ground as arguably the most important wrestler-poet since Euripides.

This crucial contest--between the values of wrestling and those of religion--is set out most starkly, and explored most fully, in "Faith," where Poffo writes:

*Some say the pen can beat the sword  
While others disagree  
To hedge my bets I carry both  
As you can plainly see*

Here the poet is acknowledging--humorously, and in symbolic terms--what it means to live a cerebral life in a world of pain and sorrow and body slams. But the verse also has a more serious undercurrent: We find Poffo (in a poem titled "Faith" no less) unable or unwilling to put his trust in justice (the pen) alone, but instead compelled from within to "hedge [his] bets," by maintaining the sword's threat of violence.

And so, beneath the work's droll surface, what Poffo is doing here, ultimately, is delivering a grim lesson about the contradictions inherent in the human condition, about the importance of faith, but also about its limits: Who among us has not felt the tug between our ideals and more practical concerns? How many of us have embraced lofty moral principles, only to find our better angels hemmed in by darker impulses?

It is worth pausing for a moment here to reflect on the meaning and essence of Poffo's primary art itself. Namely, what is wrestling but an effort to physicalize and externalize the titanic internal struggle between greed and goodness, vanity and humility? What is it, really, but an effort--with the aid of bright lights, loud music, and men in curiously high boots--to dramatize and contextualize the battles between desire and discipline that animate our daily existence? Indeed, what is the wrestling ring itself but a kind of proxy for the human soul?

And what of poetry? Is it not a means (as in "Faith") to distill those very same struggles down to their barest, silent essence? To flesh them out and render them intelligible? To find, finally, a language within which to referee the wrestling matches that rage inside us all?

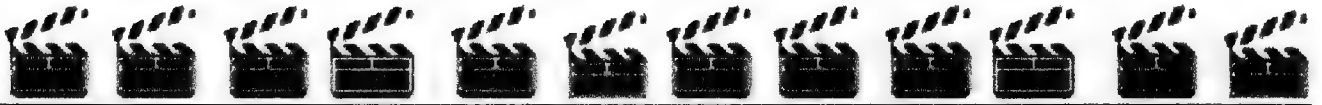
If RHYME does not answer these questions, it at least directs the reader to them. All the while, it underscores the profound psychic link between a Bruno Sammartino, for instance, and a William Blake; between a Koko B. Ware and a Langston Hughes; between a Greg (the "Hammer") Valentine and a John Keats. Certainly the task of exploring this vital nexus is not complete. But we can at least thank Poffo for starting us on the journey.



# Mary Woronov Interview

by Gene Gregortis





GG: First I wanted to start off by asking, you've done painting, you've done a lot of writing, and of course you are a cult film actress. What direction have you been moving in recently? What direction are you interested in moving in with your career?

**MW: Writing**

GG: Writing?

**MW: Yes.**

GG: I know your novel, Snake came out a few years ago?

**MW: Yes, I guess it was about 2 years ago, maybe. In June, my novel, "Niagara" is coming out. This June. In a couple of weeks.**

GG: Great, great! Now I remember Snake was your very first novel. Was it based on your own life at all?

**MW: Parts of it are, parts of it always are. The (laughs), the S/M part was not, it was a friend of mine. The Idaho part was, of course, somebody that I knew. But parts of it are.**

GG: The Idaho part was where you're almost killed by a snake - where the Billy character is almost killed by a snake.

**MW: Right, right Well actually, that happened to me.**

GG: (laughs hard) So you actually thought it was a fire alarm or something?

**MW: I did, I did! I thought it was a smoke alarm.**

**(Both laugh)**

**MW: I'd never heard a rattle before.**

GG: I don't think I've ever heard a rattle, either, except for in the movies

**MW: I know!**

GG: So what's the new one about?

**MW: Niagara? It's about this girl who thinks her past is one way but when she grows up she has to realize her past was not what she thought it was. I mean, her parents are entirely different people, her brother's a different person, and she has to either deal with it or, if she can't accept it, things just get worse and worse for her. It's also a novel about, well, her boyfriend loves her, and she actually loves her brother.**

GG: Oh, wow!

**MW: And her brother loves her boyfriend - which she doesn't know.**

GG: (Laughing) That sounds pretty interesting!

**MW: So there's that bizarre twist.**

GG: One thing from your past that I remember, from your book, Swimming Underground was, "I hated being touched by anything in the human skin package." Now was that mainly 'cause it was speed, or did you just not like people?

**MW: No, I just really didn't like the idea of being touched. I was just not ready for any kind of sexual experience, and yet every experience to me was, like, sexual, it was bizarre. I couldn't stand it.**

(GG laughs hard)

**MW: I mean you know, if someone just shook my hand, eeeuuch, I mean, I felt like it was sex. And I just didn't know how to deal with it.**

GG: Just like, hypersensitive?

**MW: (chuckles) Well you know it was that I was over-sexed, that's what it was.**

GG: (Laughs) Right.

**MW: And once I found an outlet for that - which happened very late in my life!**

GG: Well back then everyone was doing a lot of speed.

**MW: Which doesn't really help the sexual responses.**



GG: No, no. How old were you at that time? I think you were only 17, 18, or...

MW: Yeah, I think I was older, 19 maybe? 19 or 20? No -18, I would be getting out of school and that didn't happen until like my 3rd year at Cornell College.

GG: Right. Well coming from the perspective of being an ex-Warhol girl, the underground must seem very dull to you, very tame. Does it seem dull to you?

MW: Not at all, when I became acquainted with punk rock here in Los Angeles, I thought it was just as thrilling, I really did. It was not the same, but the energy was something I related to, immediately. With Warhol, it was more gay and with the punk rock, it was more hetero. It was more music whereas with Warhol it was more art, although the Velvet Underground was there, but the Velvet Underground was very punk. I mean - you know, in a way....

GG: Now the people I usually tend to agree with when I hear someone sort of cite them as the original punk aesthetic - that statement in music - I really agree with that. They were sort of the first.

MW: Right, and instead of there being one little band, suddenly there was the whole community of Los Angeles doing the same thing. It was fabulous! Can you hold on? I have to cut off my tea

GG: Sure, sure.  
TAPE CUTS



MW: And once again you know, it was connected with poetry and a new wave of literature and things. I thought it was very, very good. I loved the - I mean, it wasn't really poetry - it was song lyrics, and some of them were great. I'll never forget the line, "When I close my eyes, I see blood". I think that was the Germs. I've never forgotten that line, it's so neat.

GG: Who were your favorite bands from back then?

MW: From back then? Well, I really liked the Mau Maus.

GG: (laughs)

MW: And you know I only saw them play once and the rest of the times they were too high to get on stage.

GG: (laughs harder)

MW: We used to go and wait for them and they'd never show up! And I loved X. I will never forget watching X at the Starwood, every time they played the Starwood it was phenomenal. I liked the Germs, I liked Black Flag - I loved Fear.

GG: (incredulously) You liked Fear? (Laughs)

MW: I loved Fear! You've got to be joking!

GG: Wow!

MW: Fear was fucking great!! I didn't care for the Suburban Lawn, the vague sort of intellectual things. I was much more thick-headed, I liked things like Fear and the Dead Kennedys and you know, the bands that were just

Fear was fucking great!! I didn't care for the Suburban Lawn, the vague sort of intellectual things. I was much more thick-headed. I liked things like Fear and the Dead Kennedys and you know, the bands that were just like really dense - it wasn't so much stupid as it was they were angry, and you know, the anger was amazing!





like really dense - it wasn't so much stupid as it was they were angry, and you know, the anger was amazing! The anger was the same as the anger that I really loved when I was with Warhol. These homosexuals were still in the closet, they weren't even allowed to do anything - and they were fiercely angry! Nothing could come near the rage and the anger they felt. And this was the same thing except it was young kids - and it was so bizarre because a lot of them - you know, they weren't really poor, some of them were kind of rich!

GG: Well, don't you think that was a contributing factor making the scene a lot darker out here? More violent and nasty... I mean, compared to Warhol back then, when it was more of a gay scene and out here it was much more of an aggressively heterosexual [thing] especially because of bands like Fear and that kind of thing.

MW: Yeah, but did that make it darker? No. No, it was a different kind of darkness, they were just as dark, and just as capable of death.

GG: (Laughs)

MW: I don't know - it was different, but it was the same. But I really liked it.

GG: So, have you been out here ever since?

MW: I've been here since the 70's. The late 70's is when I came out here so I've been here all through the 80's....

GG: Is it your favorite place to live or are you just here because you know, you were getting some great films

roles. Are you still interested in movies? Because you were in *The New Women* recently.

MW: Yeah, I was interested in that movie and I did like it. I'm interested in these independent - fiercely independent - productions. And I'm not really part of the industry, and never have been.



GG: You did land some pretty big films roles for a while. I mean, one of my favorite films, you were in - "*Nomads*".

MW: I was in that.

GG: It's a great, great film.

MW: It wasn't received well...

GG: No, it wasn't, but I saw it when it came out and I was already aware of your stuff back then. I'd seen *Eating Raoul* and I thought you were just great in *Nomads*.

MW: I thought *Nomads* was fabulous.

GG: It was a really creepy film! I don't know why it was so critically reviled, you know?

MW: Wait, now you asked me something before the film thing, what was it?

GG: Is this your favorite place to live?

MW Oh, yeah, yeah! I mean, I love the East Coast, I love New York but now I've become enamored of Los Angeles, I'm not sure why. It's a great place to write and paint in, for me, but it's a very freaky town. It's very strange, people out here are not really capable of emotional attachment or friendship or, I mean, they're all on the move, they're all in the business, it's very slippery here.



GG: It's a very transient town.

**MW: I know! There's no family life or community or anything.**

GG: Right.

**MW: But in a way, I like that because also the good part of that - like, that's the bad part - but the good part of that, you know, you can be anybody you want to be you can wake up one day and decide you're a cowboy!**

(Both laugh)

**MW: And nobody's watching you. You can be poor one day and rich the next day. It's such a weird town. You can reinvent yourself any time you like.**

GG: And in New York its such a small world...

**MW: Everybody's watching you!**

GG: Yeah, you're being watched all the time.

**MW: Always. Also, this is the place of outlaws and exiles, it really is.**

GG: That's right, yeah.

**MW: And I think that, especially for literature, there are a million exiles here. Who are writing because they're trying to get rich to now, [get into] writing screenplays... there's just such a whole community of exiles. And it's always been that way, there's a big history of that. I mean, Faulkner came out here, F. Scott Fitzgerald... There's a giant history of that.**

GG: Yeah, also a lot of the people I find interesting are the people that are from here, ones that basically defined my own frame of reference before I even got here. And reading about this city through people like Ellroy and Bukowski, and John Rechy and people like that - and those are all great LA writers who...

**MW: They are! And they seem like exiles also.**

GG: That's right, yeah, they're just sort of outside of everything.

**MW: They're depressed and angry.**

(Both laugh)

**MW: ....and alone!**

GG: Well, it's an alienating city, which may be why it makes it so good for writing.

**MW: I think so, too. And you know, it's the most comfortable city to live in for the least amount of money.**

GG: Right. It's not nearly as expensive as people would think.

**MW: No, it's not. And I have trees! I never saw a tree when I was in New York!**

(GG laughs very hard)

**MW: It's really very beautiful. Still. So I'm in a love-hate relationship with it but I really have no intention of moving.**

GG: How often do you get back to New York? Do you see people...

**MW: NEVER!**

GG: (laughs) Do you keep in touch with any of the old Warhol people?

**MW: Ummm, sometimes they call. Not usually.**

GG Now Paul Bartel died recently. How do you remember him? I mean, you must have had a good relationship with him, you were in more than a few of his films.

**MW: No, I had a love/hate relationship with him. He was a wonderful friend. And every time I was in a room with him I was completely in love with him. He was just a fabulous person. But as far as work goes, after Eating Raoul, I resented the fact that he didn't use me more. And then I really resented the fact that he would tell everybody that we were married. Because everybody believed it and I couldn't get work for a long time.**

GG: (laughs)



**MW:** And the idea of me being married to him is like, completely alien.

**GG:** That's like going to see *Eating Raoul* and believing it!

**MW:** That's what he wanted!

**GG:** (laughs hard)

**MW:** I hated him for that.

**GG:** How was the whole experience of making *Eating Raoul*?

**MW:** It was a lot of fun.

**GG:** It looked like a lot of fun.

**MW:** I mean, at the time everyone was upset, we didn't have any money. But I never felt so free on a set. It was just so easy, I never even thought about what I was doing - I just did it.

**GG:** Yeah, your acting, or your technique or however you might put that, is just very natural. You don't seem like somebody who's gone to a lot of acting classes, yet is just a completely natural, very talented actress.

**MW:** And yet - I think this is from Warhol - I have this very bizarre, not camp, exactly, but it's a bizarre humor that I have. I mean, certainly in *Rock 'N' Roll* High School one could call it slightly camp.

**GG:** Yeah, but with *Eating Raoul*, even though it's a completely over-the-top film, your acting is so believable in that film.

**MW:** I loved it.

**GG:** Now, my favorite movie by Paul Bartel that you



were in is, *Scenes From The Class Struggle in Beverly Hills*. What was it like making that?

**MW:** It was very hard because Paul wasn't, he didn't really... he wasn't the same person who did *Eating Raoul*. He wasn't young and fighting - he was older and tired. And I thought that Ray Sharkey's role was terribly miscast.



GG: Yeah, it was very strange.

MW: I just didn't relate to that move at all. Now, they could have used, who was that guy who did the Dracula movie?

GG: Dracula film? Frank Langella?

MW: Yeah, Paul should have used him, he would have been perfect. And so I thought that was bad. And then Jackie Bisset and I were supposed to have equal roles but most of my footage ended up on the cutting room floor. And Paul kept saying, "Well there's just no room for it, we had to cut that scene out".

GG: Right. That would've made the movie develop if you'd been in it more.

MW: I know, I know but he's always been like that with me. "Let's get rid of Mary".

GG: So it was kind of a depressing thing. Did you like the film, though?

MW: Not really.

GG: (laughs) What's your favorite movie that you've been in, I mean Bartel or not, just in general?

MW: In general? Well I'd have to say Eating Raoul. There are other films I enjoyed doing, one was Hollywood Boulevard. I really loved doing that.

GG: Yeah, it's a cool film.

MW: And the other one was some bizarre thing called - another film with Ray Sharkey! It was called "Hell Hole".

GG: (laughs)

MW: And it was the most ridiculous film I ever did, I mean it was hysterical.

GG: It's really a sleazy film, it's about a mental institution...

MW: Yeah, it's the most sleazy, ridiculous film I ever, ever, ever did.

GG: You played a lesbian doctor, I think?

MW: (sighs) Something like that. It was insane. I just couldn't believe I was doing it! Its like, you know, the campy end of my career. And then, The New Women I really like.

GG: Yeah, I did see that about 4 months ago. Todd Hughes did that, I think.

MW: And it was done for nothing once again and I really liked my role in it, it was kind of amazing for me.

GG: You were in a couple of big Hollywood films, I guess in the late 80's. You were in Black Widow. You were in Dick Tracy. What's your take on the whole mega-budget film industry kind of thing?

MW: I used to walk in and there'd be just a long, long table and you could have an omelette with every goddamned thing in the world in it. Amazing lunches. Great quarters. Everybody's always asking you what you want. (laughs sweetly)

GG: Did you get along well with the stars in those films? Warren Beatty..

MW: Oh yeah, everyone's civil on that level. I mean, unless you're a really big star but you know I wasn't really. People are very civil. It's such a giant, big, mega, fucking production, you'll never see anybody afterwards or become friends with anyone. You are always on your guard... you know, it's always been that way. It just doesn't rate very high in my book. It's like joining a corporation. Also, I have never worked with a really wonderful director on that level. You know, I wasn't in Blade Runner. I do have to say that Warren Beatty is a pretty good director. If I was a "star" in Blade Runner, I'm sure I'd have a different take on it but I never got to that level.

GG: Do you mind if I talk about Nomads for a bit? Cause you do this great bump'n'grind in an alleyway that is a stand out, well, to me, at least it is one of the greatest moments of your career.

MW: (laughs)

GG: What did you think about making that, and the fact





that it was just so poorly received?

**MW:** I don't understand why it was poorly received. The script was wonderful, and he didn't really get the script across. I mean, I forgot the director, but he now directs.

**GG:** Yeah - Die Hard. John McTiernan.

**MW:** Right, he does Die Hard and all of those things, so he's -I'm sure- very happy, but in this film, it was his first film, I believe, and he wanted to get something cutting edge. He wanted this incredible edge. You know, the "dangerous life of the punks."

**GG:** (laughs)

**MW:** And you know, Adam Ant had been a punk for years, and I certainly was a punk. We just kept looking at him, going, "What?"

**GG:** (laughs)

**MW:** Like, "What is wrong with you?"

**GG:** Right, like someone had just played him the Ramones.

**MW:** And he was so out of whack with us, you know, it was just amazing.

**GG:** (laughs)

**GG:** So what kind of films do you watch now? What kind of films do you like to go and see?

**MW:** Oh, well, I'm afraid I don't watch any big budget films anymore. I just don't watch them, I don't want to see them. They're all about sensational bullshit, and special effects. They leave me cold. I've been watching a lot of older films. I like going to the museum... they had a Bresson thing, they have the Sagitay Ray festival there now. I've been going backwards, I really have, and watching a lot of older movies. Hollywood was great once, it really was.

**GG:** What are your favorite films in general? Since you were a kid, what kind of stuff have you always really loved?

**MW:** I have to say nothing will ever top Apocalypse Now. I love that movie.

**GG:** Yeah, me too.

**MW:** That, Blade Runner, I like those kinds of movies. Even [NAME DELETED], although I hate [NAME DELETED]!

**GG:** (laughs)



**MW:** Don't you dare put that in print!

**GG:** (laughs)

**MW:** But the movies I'm thrilled with now are Bresson films. I love him. And I love Tarkovsky. His film Andre Rubiloff. There's just so many, there really are. I had not seen these before, because I was just a straight movie person. You know, I knew all about Godard and those people but I never saw anything in the past.

**GG:** What about music? What kind of music are you



interested in?

**MW: Music?** Well, let's see,, I started with Elvis Presley.

**GG:** That's a good place to start. Yeah.

**MW:** I loved the Shangri-La's and shit like that. White rock. When The Beatles came along I tolerated them. I liked The Stones. That was it. Then I moved into black music, like everybody. I immediately went for Otis Redding and Motown. And then by that time the Velvet Underground hit and that was it for quite a while. I didn't really pay much attention to the rest of anything until punk rock. I mean, I used to listen to stuff but I wasn't crazed about it. Then punk rock came along and I was suddenly crazed about all these things. I mean, from Blondie to The New York Dolls. All of this stuff. I thought it was great. It didn't last, though, and it seemed to evaporate. And what I did was I moved straight into heavy metal.

**GG:** (laughs hard)

**MW:** I LOVE heavy metal!

**GG:** Wow!

**MW:** Fucking great stuff.

[I fall off my chair, literally, at this point.]

**MW:** Some guy handed me a tape of Metallica and I went ballistic, I had never heard them before. And then I moved right along to Nine Inch Nails, whatever, usually people give me tapes, I don't seek them out, the names always confuse me.

**GG:** Yeah, there's so many of them.

**MW:** Zombie... White Zombie, what's his name?

**GG:** Yeah, White Zombie - Rob Zombie.

**MW:** Yeah, yeah, but when he was early, what was he? I LOVE that voice. And then what happened with heavy metal is sometimes a song will still be good but something happened to me and I went from heavy metal straight to opera.

**GG:** Interesting!

**MW:** And I've been an opera nut for the last couple of years.

**GG:** So opera is what you'd throw on, around the house?

**MW:** Absolutely. Opera and pretty much long-haired music. I don't know, maybe it's a sign of age but it gets me going. What can I say? I'm just a Wagner nut.

**GG:** And you tend to burn yourself out on other things after a while, I mean opera or classical or one of those things kind of hard to get sick of.

**MW:** You can't get sick of it! Whereas with the other stuff, I can listen to it in a certain mood, but I can't continually listen to it

**GG:** One other thing I wanted to ask you about, was your painting. I know you had some shows in New York, probably about 5 or 6 years ago, I think? And are you continuing that stuff or....

**MW:** Nah, forget New York. You know I tried. But I really do believe the fact that I was an actress stood in my way. People are very snobby about painting. And the other problem with my painting is you know, I'm not conceptual and that's the big number right now. So I really paint for myself, and then these people show up and buy my work. But I don't try and do anything with it. The gallery show I'm having now is mostly for my girlfriend, who I think is a great painter, but I have one wall and she has the other wall. I don't know, I've supported myself since my acting career has gone down the tubes of old age. Nobody wants an old woman.

**GG:** Aw - no....

**MW:** So I've been supporting myself with these landscapes and the smaller figurative wood, so I'm quite happy with my painting. You know, I do it to pay the rent and yet I love doing it so it's pretty good.

**GG:** That's cool!

**MW:** But I don't believe I'll ever be in the Whitney



**[Museum in New York]. I don't know, maybe when I'm dead and people start once again thinking about beauty as opposed to thrill seeking.**

**GG: Right. Do you have any plans to actively pursue any film work?**

**MW: I do, I have a script of *Swimming Underground*, and I really would like to direct it.**

**GG: Excellent!**

**MW: And it's a brilliant script. It might just get bought from me, you know. But I would love to try and direct. But for a while I was paying the rent by directing soft-core porn, you know, like *Red Shoe Diaries*.**

**GG: You're kidding!**

**MW: No!**

**GG: What films did you do?**

**MW: Well, there was a series called "*The Women*", or "*Women*" something, God, I can't even remember.**

**GG: (laughs)**

**MW: But I wrote and directed several episodes.**

**GG: Oh, WOW!**

**MW: One about vampires, one about showgirls and one about (laughs) and one about this red dress. Every time she puts on this red dress, people want to fuck her...**

**GG: (laughs hysterically)**

**MW:...It doesn't matter who it is, it could be her son, or could be her secretary, whatever.**

**GG: Did you do these for Showtime or something?**

**MW: Yeah, I did them for Showtime.**

**GG: Great, great!**

**MW: They're really good and I really loved directing, but it's very hard to get a movie on now. But that's always on the back burner, it comes and goes. The big thing is that I have 2 more, 3 more books to write.**

**GG: Yeah, I can't wait to read your new book, and I've loved your film work for many years.**

**MW: Thank you.**

**GG: Best luck in the future. Is there anything else you wanted to say, or?**

**MW: No, except that I want you and Lydia to come to the Gallery, Friday 8-10.**

**GG: This Friday? You mean tomorrow 8-10?**

**MW: Yeah.**

**MW: There's an art show, me and my girlfriends'**

**GG: Can I write down the address?**

**MW: Harmony Gallery - you know where it is, over on Franklin!**

**GG: Oh, of course I know where that is!**

**MW: OK!**

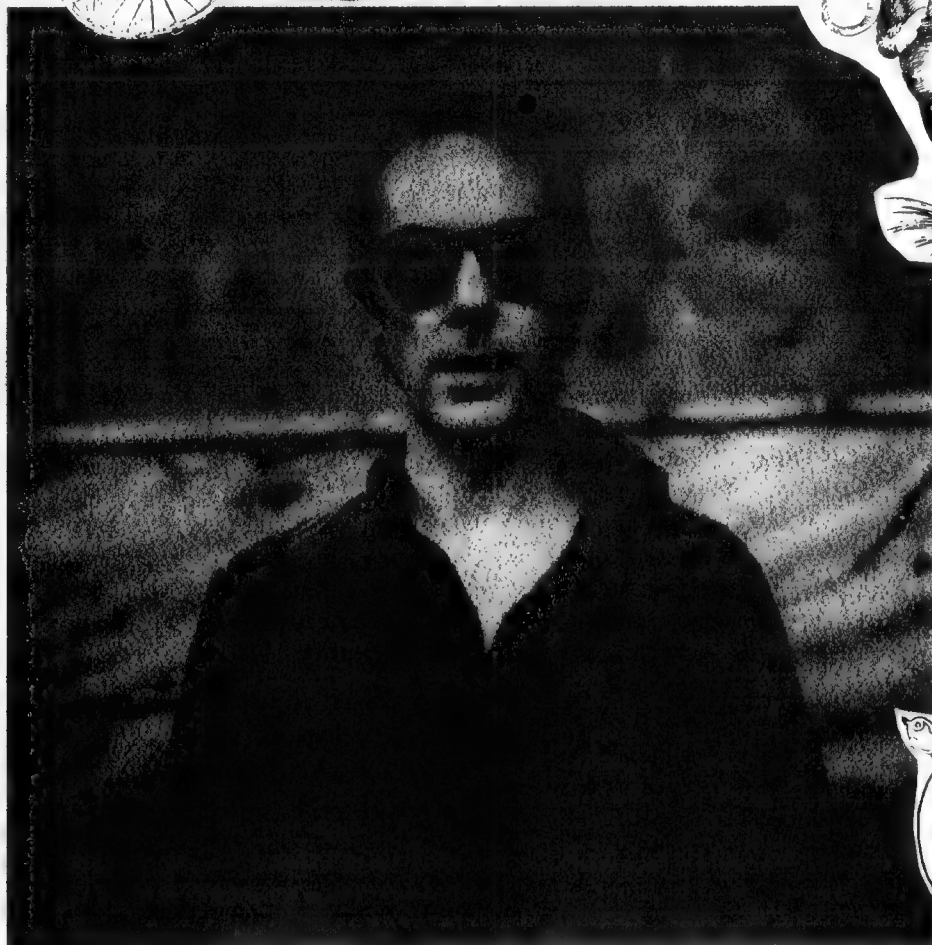
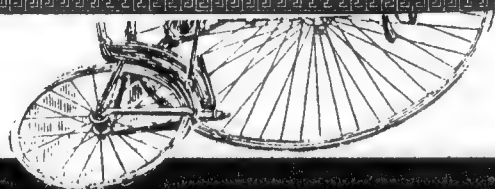
**GG: Ok, thank you!**

**MW: Neat! Alright!**

**GG: Bye, bye.**

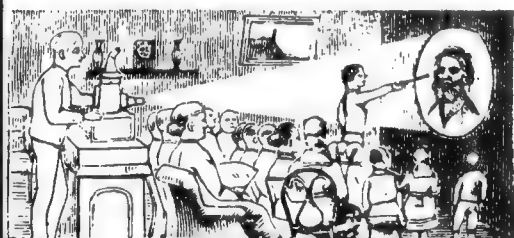
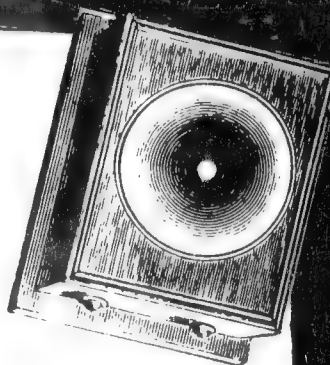
**MW: Bye, bye!**





# PETER MURPHY

INTERVIEW BY HOLLY DAY





*When I was eighteen, I shared a tiny apartment with a girl who was continuously either kicking heroin or returning from the hospital after O.D.ing on the same. While I had, of course, heard of Peter Murphy and Bauhaus long before moving in with her (it was the mid-80's, after all), she was my introduction into the total iconography of the man and the band. Our apartment looked like the headquarters of the official Bauhaus fan club—the walls were lined with photos of Daniel Ash and Peter Murphy, there was a life-sized photo of the band in the tiny, cramped bathroom, and everyone who came in through the door was dressed in spooky black from head to toe.*

*So it was especially surreal to actually speak to Peter Murphy, all these years later, and find that he's actually a pretty nice guy, soft-spoken with a slight stutter and a sweet laugh, and not one-tenth as scary as the ominous half-shadowed face that used to leer at me from across the living room over a case of empties and a fog of cigarette smoke. Comfortably married and living in Turkey for over a decade, even Murphy's music seems peaceful, reflected especially in his newest solo release, "Dust". Co-written and co-produced with Canadian DJ Mercan Dede, "Dust" is an amazing collection of songs heavy with both Eastern and Western influences, traditional Turkish instrumentation mixed with electric guitar riffs and DJ culture. -Holly Day*

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HOLLY: How did you first get into playing music?

MURPHY: I was through—actually, I started as a boy, whistling and singing, constantly. I was one of those who just loved to imitate and to listen and harmonize along with all my elder brothers' and sisters' records, ranging from like, Beatles to Rolling Stones to the whole gambit of the '60s artists. And then after, I had this sort of like...wish...that was kind imprinted in me, that I'd like to be a singer. I had some very classic-like experiences, like when watching a band or a performer on TV, I would always invariably have the thought that I could do better than that. So it was like that—I guess it was just there, in me, all the time.

HOLLY: That's interesting. I wouldn't have pictured

you as happy, whistling, singing child.

MURPHY: Well, I was a singing child, anyway. When I used to go off to school, Monday mornings, that wasn't a very happy time for me. I used to sing my way through certain songs a lot back then, just to make the time go by, kind of whistle my way to work, as it was.

HOLLY: So was your family supportive when you decided to pursue music professionally?

MURPHY: Oh, yes. Definitely. They were thrilled at the idea. They loved it. Actually, I sort of made a massive change once Daniel Ash and I formed what was to become Bauhaus—we were old school friends—and we basically met up one weekend and wrote what turned out to be 70% of the first Bauhaus album. And that was the first experience I'd had in writing proper, as it were, writing and composing songs. And two weeks later, I was on the stage, for the first ever time, and it all came very naturally.

HOLLY: Did you parents have any artistic inclinations themselves?

MURPHY: Yeah, I think so. I mean, my father was Irish, Southern Irish, and he had that very inherent wistfulness and love of song and music. My sister, actually, is a very good artist, and I used to paint with her, join her in her oil painting sessions. I guess that's it, really. Mostly, my parents were concentrating on survival, and we were from the working class in England, and most of their focus, most of their priorities, were really on bringing in food for the children, and making money at their jobs.

HOLLY: Your music has almost always had this particularly sinister quality to it. Are you a sinister person yourself?

MURPHY: Um, no. Well, maybe, yes, I think that sometimes I can be quite direct, and, rather than sinister, saturnine, very concentrated. Often—and I don't notice this when I'm in a social situation—but close friends, or particularly my wife, will point out that I need to lighten up. And I'm not necessarily aware that I was not light at all. So probably, yes, I suppose I can come off as sinister

at times, but the word I would use to describe myself would be more saturnine than sinister. But a lot of people may interpret me as being sinister, because they don't really know how to read my behavior.

**HOLLY:** So what led to your interest in portraying dark and spiritual themes through your music?

**MURPHY:** It depends on what you mean or how you define dark, I guess. But spiritual themes, dark—I think both of those words are metaphors for each other, sort of a link in a sense, in that if you use the word “esoteric”, it's not necessarily dealing with mystery, if you like, but more metaphor, which I use a lot in my work, with a sense of glamour, and personality. I think it's also the summoning up of the rock star, the science of being a rock star, as well. It's a sort of aesthetic that works in rock star iconic language, which I am sort of a scientist of, if you like (laughs).

**HOLLY:** So how did this new record come about?

**MURPHY:** It came about through years of living in Turkey, having lived there and absorbed and listened to a lot of the culture hands-on, as it were. Being in Turkey, I've almost become more Turkish than Turkish people. I'd been sort of carrying this sort of idea-wish in my creative mind to make an album that really did attempt to synthesize both Eastern and Western culture, but not be either of them, but yet be completely original and new, breaking boundaries, in a way. And if I were to make that leap in that album, it was going to have to be with the right people or person. It was unclear how this album was going to actually come about for a while, but then it became much more realized, the idea became almost magnetized, once I'd heard—almost mistakenly, by chance—an album by an artist named Mercan Dede, which was entitled “Sufi Dreams”, and the name had a very enigmatic quality, because usually if you call yourself Dede, that is a title usually bestowed upon an elderly, wise holy man. And so I was intrigued with that, and also, the music really leapt out at me, with its having a very obviously Western, progressive element in it, which was really unusual and unique.

And then I was just wondering, musing as to who this Mercan might be, when he called, at that

instant, which I thought was a very interesting, kind of synchronicitious moment. Actually, he was calling to speak to my wife, but we ended up speaking at great length about who he was and who I was, and decided we should meet to talk about music. Mercan turned out to be a young Turk in Istanbul formerly from Montreal, working as a DJ. Hmm, yes, that was very interesting to me, so I met up with him immediately. I went to Istanbul, which is about eight hours away from where I live, and I immediately knew, instinctively, that this was going to be the start of this album I had been envisioning. So I invited Mercan to come and produce it with me.

**HOLLY:** When did you start recording it?

**MURPHY:** We started in June of 2001, and we finished in late September. So it took about 3 months, writing, recording, and mixing, all in one go. I mean, I purposefully set out with the idea to write the album in the studio, rather than coming with too many preconceived ideas. So that was the nature of the album, very fluid and very inspired—it was an easy sort of album to put together, in that way.

**HOLLY:** It could almost be interpreted as a political statement, with the times being the way they are right now, of the melding of Eastern and Western culture.

**MURPHY:** Right! Yes! And it is synchronicitious, again, quite timely, and not on a conscious level. Obviously, I was working on that level, while we were recording, trying to find some blend of the two cultures. But after the atrocity of September 11 happened—and I'm not the only artist this applies to, even though each of us would all like to think we're the only one it applies to—the work seems to have taken on a relevant quality, that it ties in with that bigger issue, the need for both cultures to come together in an understanding and respect. But, like I said, that's a very natural, subjective comment to be expected from artists, because we are all very egocentric, and we like to read our own images and interpretations into our work. So that might not necessarily be accurate. But definitely, there was a certain healing quality and a lot of information on this album, on a very sort of nebulous level, I guess, that really does offer a lot of new perspectives about this whole question of East/West, what is Islam,

what is West, who is who, etc., etc.

**HOLLY:** Is it frightening living in the Middle East right now?

**MURPHY:** Not at all. It's more frightening living in North America, from what I've heard. The political atmosphere in North America right now is extremely paranoid, but I think that's to be understood, as this is the first occasion since Pearl Harbor that the U.S. proper has been attacked. This is the first time in a long while that the U.S. has gotten to experience what's been happening around the world for centuries, to the Dutch, and the French with the Basques, and to even the British, who were constantly under the threat of the IRA in the '80s, and, of course, Croatia. So yeah, the paranoia in America is slightly over-exaggerated, but it's an understandable reaction, but I think eventually it will help America to shake a bit of its naivete, its innocent belief that any place in the world can be truly isolated from that kind of attack.

**HOLLY:** I noticed on this album that you use almost exclusively live musicians. What made you go with actual instruments instead of just synth patches and MIDI?

**MURPHY:** Right. Well, it's actually quite a deceptive album. There's a large element of electronica on there, but it's there to add a subtle layer, if you like, a subconscious layer. There's a lot of use of sampling and also taking found objects from the environment in which we were working, and sampling those, making rhythms out of those, which is especially found in the bedrock rhythms. From there, from that synthetic bedrock layer, we left a lot of space for what you call "live musicians." That was one of the important elements of the album, that the contributing musicians and their instruments had to have something very organic to them and the way they played. So basically, I devised the songs in the first week of recording, really. I wrote and laid out all the vocals down onto tape, and so, by the time guest musicians had arrived, we had planned it so that the songs would be basically defined, really, as lyrical pieces and vocal melodies. So, yeah, musicians were then able to really, without direction, able to complement the songs without getting in the way, so to say, so the album ends up sounding sort of natural, and organic.

**HOLLY:** So how are you going to tour for this album? Will you all be traveling together in a van, all fifteen-plus people on the album?

**MURPHY:** Well, no, it's a tour bus. And I'm on bringing a five-piece along with me for the tour.

**HOLLY:** That always seems like it would be so close to be in a tour bus together like that.

**MURPHY:** Yeah, well, that's how it is, and when you're touring, it's kind of like being in the Army, in a sense. Your days are so judiciously mandated, and you sort of create this bond between the various personnel as well as the band, the crew. You have a sound man, a stage man, a roadie, technicians, and so you bind. Or not (laughs).

**HOLLY:** I wouldn't be very good at that. I have a hard enough time living with my husband sometimes!

**MURPHY:** Yes, it is quite difficult, but what's nice about it, in a way, is that while it is hard work, it's also so concentrated on the performance and putting the shows together that the whole experience is really what musicians live for, the performance. So being so close with so many musicians at once, it's really very special, quite wonderful. In the past, I'd often weaken myself with self-indulgence, and even overindulgence, but that doesn't work well. You just end up being a dead legend, living like that. Unfortunately (laughs).

**HOLLY:** During your career, both as a solo artist and in Bauhaus, your records have always had just this pristine recording quality to them. Is that something that's been especially important to you?

**MURPHY:** Oh, yes. Definitely. I'm a sucker for rich, sonic tapestries. I really enjoy layering sounds in the studio—my work is largely dependent on that collage feel, of layers of sounds upon each other. I'm not a musician in the classic sense. I'm much more of a natural experimentalist in that I like throwing curves into the mix, and seeing what comes out. And that's all in an effort to look for something that's original, something that's never been heard of, in a way. That's the intention, anyway.

In fact, before you called, I was just listening back

and reviewing the arrangements of the music on the CD, and criticizing myself for little things, and making little notes for the band to work with next week, and I'm trying to consolidate my ideas of what approach we're going to take to this music in the live show, and also taking the opportunity to sing and form a set order, and sing with the order, in a ways of getting my vocals up to par.

**HOLLY:** What do you think is the biggest change in the music industry from when you first started?

**MURPHY:** I think it's exactly the same. I think it goes through cycles—I mean, there's always been a pop strata, a corporate mass-production element in rock and roll, or popular music, and there are always going to be those who are the progressive pioneers. Nowadays, it seems as though the music scene is dominated by a very populist alternative scene, which I liken to a sort of corporate, pseudo-alternative scene, whereby you get corporations encouraging rebellious behavior and aesthetic, which are not the real deal. So there are a lot of smoke and mirrors out there. But I think it's also become, in the past fifteen years or so, or even ten years, certainly, much more American pop-dominated—that's not to be equated with musical pioneering, but I think it's become such a market-orientated business that American pop stars that sell millions of records are consisted the ideal pinnacle to many international musicians, and that sometimes tends to overwhelm and even infect people who were at one time quite original. Everyone has gotten so caught up in that mind set that originality has been put way on the backburner, so

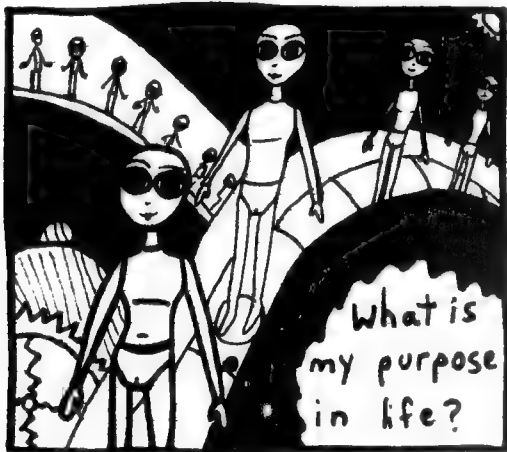
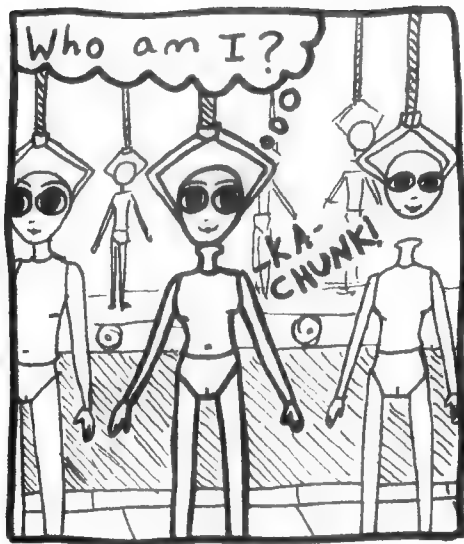
to speak. I am, however—we're still out here, so don't worry (laughs).

There are bands here in Turkey, even, who have something very original about them, but they've still got this corporate, boy-band American rock feel to their music, which I consider to be a sickness started by the originators of the quiet rock movement, Nirvana—formulaic, with quiet buildup to an explosive chorus, then back to quiet, and explode, silence, explode, et cetera, et cetera. And they're equated all over the world with alternative music, if you like, and it's okay, but it feels false to me. But that's what drives the truly alternative music ceiling to new heights. If you look at England, Britain's always going to come up with something truly groundbreaking, and eccentric, and wild. And I'm not even talking about pop music in Britain—not at all. You get some really amazing underground work happening in the dance and house and trance areas, which is a scene that feels like punk to me. It's kids of the street making these really quick, brilliant pieces of experimental music. So I think there's a rich cultural exchange happening in the rave scene; that, and in the really obscure, German outfits like Scape, and Oval, who are really minimalist, like where you would have expected Eno to have come to, but they're there instead.





# Dolltopia by Abby Denson



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KING TOILET PACKAGE!



One-eyed Cyclop of Sicily

MONSTROUS MUTANTS

AN INTERVIEW WITH WIRE!

GUT PUNCH

THE UNCENSORED JIM DAN BEBBER INTERVIEWS  
BY GENE GREGORIS



Ozzy's impeccable, Fool-Proof Rating System:  
One beer can: Don't Bother to look up from the toilet you're Pukin In.  
Two Beer Cans: Barely worth leaving you're Gin induced stupor for.

3 cans: Ok, but don't bother hitting the pause button when you're AA sponser calls.  
4 cans: Not too bad & the buzz is kickin' in.  
5 cans: Hot damn!! Heineken?! Fuck that shit!  
PABST BLUE RIBBON!!  
6 cans of BEER: "My name ix Ozzy. I am an alcoholic."



# SIX PACK THEATER



## PREMUTOS

(d) Ulfat Etenbach

William Blake once opined that the road of excess leadeth to the palace of wisdom as one could never know what is enough until one has had more than enough. Well, after seeing this German zombie splatterfest, Mr. Fide can now safely say he has a handle on wretched excess. Premutos possesses a number of wonderful gore sfx but they are repeated so often and endlessly that they become tiresome and rather dull. Hard to believe one can say as much about a film which makes Peter Jackson's horror efforts look like a Disney outing. Of course, one might not have to say such things if this effort had something resembling a story and wasn't plotted so haphazardly. In an effort to pad the running time, the producers have thrown in a number of comic bits but, as we all know, the Germans don't do comedy. At least not well and this too serves to lessen the impact of all the sanguinary shock pieces. Of which

there are about two or three hundred thousand. Premutos is being played up in the horror press as the find of the year but unless you enjoy endless replays of head being blown up and squibs exploding, you might want to avoid this flick.



## SOCK IT TO ME, BABY

(d) Joe Campa (1968)

Women wishing to understand just how pathetic men are, just how low they can sink in their unceasing quest for cheap thrills, need search no further than this obscure soft-core rarity. Our feature concerns a hefty, balding,

alcoholic middle-aged man who is being driven slowly insane by all the sin he sees in the suburbs. The guy, let's call him Lou, has an attractive French mistress who doesn't mind sharing her whiskey and her bed with him but



it's just not enough. It can never be enough. Not when everywhere you look, you are confronted by tender naked, flesh. Like the niece, a slatternly blonde who, though sleeping with Lou's wife, likes to lie around Lou's house in next to nothing. When Lou runs into his bedroom and locks the door, the niece heads to the bathroom to loudly masturbate and cry Lou's name.

Then there's Lou's wife, a lesbian, who enjoys throwing parties in which high school bi-sexual women are encouraged to strip to rock and roll music. Lou can't shut his bedroom door to this as his wife is on the bed making out.

OK, run outside with the bottle. No dice, as the curtains are up for the show next door. Quite a show too, it involves a baby-sitter and a number of drunken JDs with all manner of perverse fantasies. Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, Lou baby. And that's what makes *Sock It To Me, Baby*, something other than run-of-the-mill fodder for the 60s raincoat crowd: its crude but effectively unrelenting depiction of a world gone mad with promiscuity. Mad to the point of catatonia. Where sex is rote, the participants performing with unhurried urgency, like automotons in a burlesque of lust. We aren't even given the satisfaction of watching attractive actors and actresses. And why should we? The sex here isn't about "attraction" or even lust. Nor is the depiction of sex here clinical. It's deadier than that. Yeah, there's a sock to *Sock It To Me*, but it hits you in places you don't expect. Ouch!

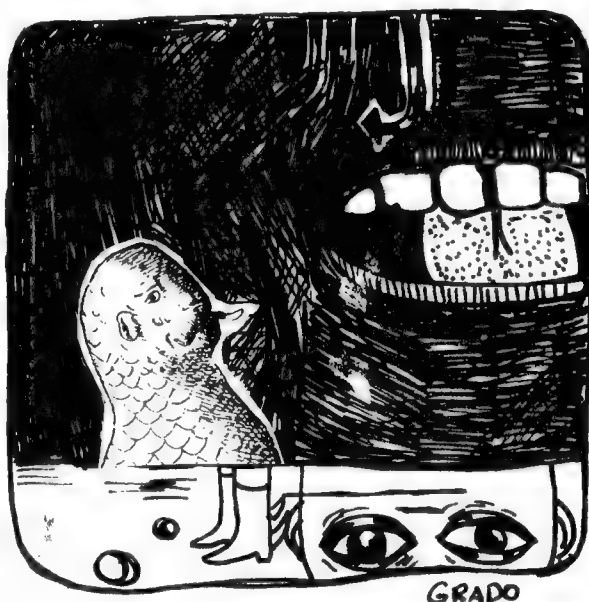


## ICHI THE KILLER

(Directed by Takeshi Miike)

In previous issues and weekly updates, Ozzy's been singing the praises of Japanese madman Takeshi Miike, who appears to be putting out very sick but entertaining movies at a rate of about 3 or 4 a year, it would seem. Well, I thought that whacko had reached rock bottom with "Visitor Q" (see Issue #36 for review), but then I started reading about yet another new, more gruesome spectacle by the name of "Ichi the Killer", so of course I had to procure a copy. This new one is a cross between a good old-fashioned Japanese yakuza/gangster film, super-hero comic strip, and hardcore S&M gross-out - just up Ozzy's alley, in other words! After the opening credits (words magically formed from a pool of fresh

semen, created when a yakuza mob boss pulls out too quickly from his moll), a mobster appears to get brutally slaughtered/butchered by an unknown assailant. This mob boss's "disappearance" is quickly investigated by one Mr. Kakiyama, a blonde-haired yakuza whose mouth has been radically widened (he has safety pins strategically inserted to reduce his mouth back to normal size, but blows cigarette smoke out the "vents" - and he removes the pins in a later fight scene, all the better to swallow his opponent's hand and chew off most of it). This nut has a penchant for torturing others and himself - including hanging a rival gangster by hundreds of huge fish-hooks through his back - and pouring boiling oil from his freshly-cooked shrimp tempura on the poor bastard's back! As penance for this bad judgment (as the impaled was innocent), Kakiyama pulls out a razor and slices off half his tongue and hands it over. All of this occurs in the first 15 minutes, mind you! The plot thickens as one Ichi is introduced - a mysterious and very disturbed martial artist killer who creatively uses razor blade-edged boots to dice and disembowel dozens of mobsters (including a great scene where he slices a man in half right before our eyes). Kakiyama's quest becomes one of trying to track down Ichi - but it's not clear as to whether he wants to kill him or just get tortured by him. A very sick movie that, I'm sure, Miike will probably top shortly. Ozzy's only problem is that he has the 115 minute version of this movie - and he hears there's an uncut version that contains 15 more minutes of mayhem.







the good doc decides to try it on his wife's head after she's decapitated in a car accident. Putting the head in a baking pan and pumping it full of the drug, our psychotic surgeon no sooner sees his ex-wife start to blink then he's off to strip joints to look for a curvaceous body. And have a few drinks and watch a cat fight or two (Man, those 50s strippers were the most!). Meanwhile back in the lab, the head makes life miserable for the assistant by insisting on metaphysical conversations and for the eggplant guy who she telepathically humiliates by berating him for not being strong enough to break out of the closet in which our

deranged doc has locked him up for his own protection. While not being assaulted by banal library music - some of which later turned up in Andy Milligan's *The Body Beneath* - the viewer is treated to expostulations such as: "The paths of experimentation twist and turn through mountains of miscalculations and often lose themselves in error and darkness." Yes, you're right this is a work of calculated genius. Or diabolical dopiness. Six dozen of one. Half dozen of the other. It doesn't matter what you say about movies like this; you're right no matter what you say. Look for the unedited version which finds the assistant getting his withered arm pulled off by the mutant resulting in what is probably the longest death scene in the history of cinema.



## THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE

(d) Joseph Green II (1962)



**ALIVE . . . WITHOUT A  
BODY . . . FED BY AN  
UNSPEAKABLE HORROR  
FROM HELL!**

Great tag line but unspeakable is the right word for this flick. As inunspeakably bad. How bad? Well, it took these Tarrytown, New Jersey filmmakers almost three years to get their film into general release. And this during the late 50s, when drive-ins would play almost anything! Except this abomination, which finds a brilliant surgeon seeking to perfect a serum which will reanimate dead tissue. Despite the fact that the serum has withered his assistant's hand and turned a stranger into a giant killer eggplant,





## **HORROR of the BLOOD MONSTERS**

starring **JOHN CARRADINE - ROBERT DIX**  
an **AL ADAMSON** Production

released by  
**Independent-International**  
**Pictures Corp.**

## **HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS**

(d) Al Adamson (1970)

Oz wasn't sure if it was the Belgian beer (12% alcohol) or an acid flashback but He coulda sworn he was watching not just one, but about five different movies while this risible and highly entertaining "horror" movie unspooled. Curious, Mr. Fide decided to do a little research- which He hates to do as making things up is so much more entertaining -and found that yes indeed,

Blood Monsters is a pastiche of a number of films. Here's the story: sometime around 1967 or so schlockmeister Al Adamson got his hands on a black and white Filipino sci-fi film about two primitive warring tribes on another planet. Because one of the tribes is vampiric, Adamson thought that with a little dubbing, he'd have a drive-in hit on his hands. Al brought the monstrosity to producer Sam Sherman who told him that they'd have to tint the black and white film various colors to make it commercially viable and that they'd have to provide a framing story showing that some of these alien vampires had somehow gotten to earth and begun a vampire plague with American astronauts subsequent-

ly dispatched to root out this evil at its core. This meant Al would have to film a prologue and then sequences on the alien planet and then intercut those sequences with scenes from the Filipino flick.

Well, Adamson films the new alien planet

sequences but in an effort to save money on the rocket-ship interior and exterior scenes, he buys a twenty-minute featurette from a friend which has such scenes and splices that on to his flick. But he forgets to film the prologue showing the vampires attacking earthlings and so he's given a script for this written by Sherman and either he or Sherman, Oz forgets who, slaps this bit onto Blood Monsters, more than two years after Adamson presented his finished product.

OK, still with Oz, so far? We've now got four different films going - the original b&w Philippine thing, the purchased featurette, the American color sequences on the alien planet, and the prologue - and Sherman, after once again viewing what Adamson thinks is the final cut, still isn't satisfied. We're on year three of post production with a major turkey here, and Sam's still tinkering. Blood Monsters needs sex and so, viola, film bit number six: a meaningless subplot with two scientific technicians making out whilst hooked up to a sex-enhancer machine consisting of little more than cable wire and colored diode tubes.

Believe it or don't the film, when finally released in 1970, was a major drive-in hit and ultimately became something of a cult classic. Hard to see why as Blood Monsters is virtually incomprehensible and thanks to the red tinting of much of the b&w footage, actually headache inducing. Nevertheless, incomprehensibility in a feature gets you two cans right off the bat from Mr. Fide. Anything, any film with the incomparably bad John Carradine, gets you another two brewskis and constancy in the realm of idiot incongruity, e.g., smoking on board the spaceship, brain operations in the desert, astronauts toting bolt-action rifles, puts the final tally at a full six pack. Which shouldn't be so surprising, as most of Adamson's "horror" films are accidental works of idiot genius.



## DAGON

(d) Stuart Gordon (2001)



Remember all the hope we horror fans had for Stuart Gordon? Can barely recall the name now, right? He was the director and guiding light behind the classic gore-comedy, The ReAnimator. Try to think of another flick he's directed. Good luck but nevertheless, Mr. Fide comes today not to throw a few spadefuls of dirt on Gordon's grave but to praise him because the latest effort of his is pretty damn good. Sticking to the horror essentials 3Bs - boobs, beasts and blood - Gordon's pastiche of two H.P. Lovecraft stories is suspenseful, smartly paced and nicely shot. The story ain't much - a geekish American computer specialist and his gorgeous Eurotrash galpal get stuck in a town filled with people gradually mutating into grotesque gillmen - but the telling of any tale, no matter how impoverished is often in the details. And Gordon gives us plenty of details in the form of ghoulish special effects and costuming, unspeakable rites, piscatory sex, grisly demises and inventive chase scenes. Although you can see the denouement coming from a mile away, it matters little, you'll be too busy maniacally chuckling at Gordon and company's joyful and almost sublime wallowing in the depraved.



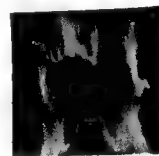
GRABO

# Library



## The Straw Men

by Michael Marshall



On the cover is a two-word blurb by Stephen King: "A Masterpiece." In the old sense of the term, that's exactly what this is; proof that this writer can now be considered a master and venture out on his own.

It starts with a massacre in a McDonald's in a small Pennsylvania railroad town. On a personal note, I think I recognize my own hometown in the description, although he changes the name to protect the publisher's deep pockets. This massacre, reminiscent of Columbine and so many other shootings, is presented in detached, ironic third-person writing that makes you smile even as you wince. He's got a smart mouth on him, this kid, and a great ear for the underplayed dead-pan sarcasm.

Next we meet the first-person narrator, a guy whose parents have been killed in a car crash. Only maybe not, if the note saying, "We're not dead," means anything. If the weird videotape with three mysterious snippets of his parents' lives on it means anything. The mystery develops urgency when bad things start happening.

The book then continues to alternate



between third-person narration about the hunt for a serial kidnapper/killer, who has snatched yet another little girl, and the first-person search to make sense of dead parents' lives. The kidnapping, by the way, is rendered all the more terrifying by the clever twist Marshall has layered into things. He comes up with a way many of the recent child kidnappings could be related, yet never connected by the police, not even by the VICAP national computer logs. It is as chilling as the way the killer picks his victims in *Red Dragon* by Thomas Harris. And given the reasons, it's even worse.

A high level of action and vivid scenes of confrontation combine with superb writing to keep things moving, and interesting, and meaningful. The little girl, turns out, is kept under the floor boards and given only water laced with bad things. The reason why will chill you, and resonates with an evil that infected the Third Reich, although this is no standard Neo-Nazi menace. It's much more insidious, and realistic, and modern.

It's also evil in the most human sense. And vice versa. It makes the reader realize that the vast majority of us are, literally, prey, and playthings. Nothing more. We are trifles to be used and discarded at whim, and not by gods, but by other men.

**The dead parents, readers learn, did things so weird and possibly despicable that the son chasing them down ends up not sure who the hell even he is anymore, let alone them.**

Who the villain is, which isn't really kept all that hidden, may surprise some, and certainly sets up a lovely mandala of yin-yang meanings and deeper questions. There is art and artifice both in this book, and a very playful mind having fun with serious material. While it's not exactly a light touch, it is certainly heavy in an enjoyable way.

Eventually the narration lines merge and things become really intense, and we're led to both a satisfying conclusion and a hint of more to come. Sequel? Series? Or just a perfect stand-alone

novel that plays it cool about loose ends and how real life tends to like them? Could go any of those ways, or many others, given this writer's demonstrated ability to keep the twists coming. If you want to read one of the quirkiest, best, and most satisfying thrillers of many years, grab a copy of *The Straw Men*. Oh, and by the way, the *Straw Men* of the title? They might well be real. And in charge.

--Gene Stewart

**One can hardly expect to be wholly free of mental tension.**

--H. P. Lovecraft

## **Into the Wild**

by Jon Krakauer



### **Wild Child**

*Into the Wild* has the bracing effect of your foot slipping at the edge of a cliff -- relief mingles for an instant with the exhilaration of a glimpse into the depths of your own mortality. You end up knowing you're pampered and glad the lesson didn't cost you what it cost Christ McCandless, the subject of this book and its object lesson.

**McCandless was 24 when he found death by starvation at the end of a 16 week sojourn into the Alaskan wilderness. As Krakauer makes plain, he might have made it, if not for two fairly trivial mistakes. As he also makes clear, the Wild made**

**those mistakes, or ones like them,  
damned nearly inevitable for the  
likes of McCandless.**

Despite being from a well-off family; despite academic brilliance; despite undeniable courage; despite much experience living on his own on the road; despite a good deal of luck; despite his many advantages, McCandless was burdened by one of the many human traits the Wild finds unforgivable, idealism.

The wilderness demands and forces compromises. It is relentless in its attack on plans and merciless in its pursuit of doubts. But it can be dealt with. If respected, and with luck, you can come through. Hemingway wrote about this stuff, which is why anyone who hasn't experienced it tends to sneer and find it exaggerated. It's not, though. Krakauer knows that the wilderness doesn't play games and doesn't respect attitudes. McCandless, almost all attitude, approached the wilderness not as adversary -- a similar mistake others have made -- and not as it is, but as an ideal.

It eats idealism like whales eat plankton, almost without noticing. That's why Jack London's melodramas won't cut it as survival manuals.

Jon Krakauer, who has climbed famous peaks and explored uncharted wilderness, is an ideal teller of McCandless's tale because he understands what drove the younger man. Krakauer also understands the call of the wild, in Jack London's phrase, and even better understands the lure of testing one's self against danger that can become fatal with a mis-timed blink of the eye. In the book he relates why he felt so easily able to identify with McCandless, whom he refuses to see as either victim or idiot.

The book is written in crisp prose with many poetic touches that don't drag down the informative tone. Vivid appreciation for nature mingles with tough-minded simpatico for people like McCandless, who wanted to experience true freedom, true self-reliance, and true wildness.

McCandless did not end up dead due to recklessness. He didn't starve to death because he was naive. McCandless didn't even push things too far, except in an ultimate sense of exposing himself to the

Wild in all its cruelty in the first place. Anyone who does that pushes it, every time. Understand that and you might get out alive.

Into the Wild reads like a detective story, a biography, an adventure account, and a dream. It is as classically restrained as any literary novel might be, and as emotionally wrenching as any go-for-broke melodrama. There are fine passages here that rank among the best wilderness writing, and a story that still fires controversy over McCandless and how to characterize him. As with his other works, most notably *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's participant's account of the disastrous 1996 Mt. Everest climbing disaster, which took eight lives, *Into The Wild* evokes the way it felt and some of why it happened. This is invaluable insight.

It is a dangerous book to have around, though, if you also have idealistic, bright teenagers around, especially boys. Don't let them read it until they've proven themselves tame. If you do, you might end up like McCandless's parents, and lose your child to the Wild. To do so is a baffling tragedy that speaks to the cowering beast in us all.

--Gene Stewart



**"My independence is my wealth; it is  
my literature. I have written to  
please myself, no matter who should  
be hurt."**

**-Ambrose Gwinett Bierce**

## **American Gods**

by Neil Gaiman



**This book comes complete with a set  
of reviewer's blurbs that would make**

## Gore Vidal blush.

Such effusive praise must be based on something, right?

Gaiman's prior books, such as *Neverwhere* and *Smoke & Mirrors*, offered us a glimpse of a serious writer doing genre work. This one has the feel of a genre writer doing serious work, but that's not a put-down, largely because he almost pulls it off.

*American Gods* is a picaresque novel that focuses on Shadow, a huge guy who is just about to be released from jail as we meet him. He's eager to see his wife, whom he loves, and he was in jail because of the crimes of others. Now he's ready to be sprung, and the news comes that his wife, and best friend, are both dead. Both were killed in the same car crash. In the same car.

**And she died with a significant part of his best friend in her mouth.**

Shadow's world is shattered. His sacrifice as gone for nought. And so he's released into a world that no longer holds a damned thing for him. Or so he thinks.

He meets a cheap, older man who calls himself Wednesday. This guy makes a living conning people with grifts as old as civilization, governments, and gods. In the course of this first evening, Shadow drinks Wednesday's mead, fights a leprechaun who's even bigger than he is, and he's like six feet eight, and is given a gold coin with which to practice his endless prestidigitation. Shadow does coin manipulations to take up the slack time and calm himself. From this simple beginning we get...well, a simple story that takes Shadow all over the midwest United States, with a jaunt to San Francisco, where he meets a succession of oddly-named people. Most are old, all are eccentric to say the least, and all have that noumenal glow that tells of godly hints, winks, and nudges. Their names are often contorted and hard to squint at, but it's a fantasy so you go along.

This cutesy name-scheme will annoy those familiar with the gods of various mythologies, and spoil the foreshadowing too, but that's a small cavil.

I liked this book but it took me forever to read it. Not sure why, but I suspect it was the succession of interchangeable scenes. They just kept coming, without adding up to anything. There didn't seem to be a bigger



**BRAIN POWER**

pattern. Unlike *Neverwhere*, which was a much better-organized and streamlined book, *American Gods* leans out of the moving vehicle and tries to grab Significance a bit too often, perhaps. Or was it merely pertinence? It lacked cohesion.

Okay, there was a mysterious and highly significant battle coming, yes. It flickered at the vanishing point on

the long horizon as if teasing us onward. **It was to be between the old gods, dragged to the North American continent by immigrants over the centuries, and the new gods, such as TV and Internet and Political Correctness.**

The old gods are a pretty broken-down lot by now, from neglect and lack of respect. Most barely eke out a living, with the exception of lovely Oestre, who is a kind of female Bacchus whom we first meet. The new gods are pimply rich fat smart-asses who are also callow, unsure of themselves, and a bit dull. The battle is the reason everything's happening, but it never gets there, except in a mostly off-stage half-hearted set of scenes that are mostly concerned with aftermath. By this time we have learned that the battle was just a con to sucker the gods into shedding their blood for the good of, yes, Odin and Loki. So what began as a conceit with huge potential is frittered away on a somewhat banal and Marvel Comics sort of ending.

**Much of this book is superbly written. Gaiman has talent, vision, and guts. He does very well keeping his Britishisms out of the book, although there are a few, mostly nearer the end where the proof readers were probably feeling the length a bit.**

Cutting down the set-up scenes and expanding the battle into something worthy of all the conniving, whisper-

ing, and plotting would improve the book. It would also lessen its bid for significance. Make no mistake, a writer like Gaiman can write any form he wants, and excel. He is better than most, and just getting warmed up. *American Gods* is well worth reading, and very enjoyable. It's also not his masterpiece, and doesn't begin to live up to the puff blurbs on and inside its covers.

Read it not as "unforgettable" but rather as just "damned good" and you'll get a kick out of it, and come away with some cool imagery. Read more than what's on the page into the book and you may be reaching.

Oh, and look the hell out for his NEXT book, because he's going to get all these elements to gel one day in an ambitious book like this one, and when it happens, it will be spectacular.

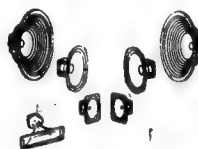
Now go outside and play while you still can still catch the old gods at frolic and at ease.

--Gene Stewart

***Seeing an intelligence behind the random is a sign of madness, used especially in diagnosing paranoid schizophrenia -- yet we let it go when it comes to religion***

***"The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them."***

-- George Orwell





Housekeeper and poisoner Catherine Wilson.



## Hardcase

by Dan Simmons



*"Art must entertain and enlighten. To do only one, is a waste of time and effort."*

--Voltaire

We expect a cartoon when we pick up a hard-boiled detective novel. We want one, with lots of slam-bang action and colorful characters, tough talk and bullet-spittin' wise cracks. What we don't want is a book so derivative that we blink as we keep recognizing this or that movie, TV show, or, no kidding, actual cartoon.

I stopped reading this book at the start of Ch. 23, on page 144. How I got that far is beyond me. I bailed during a description of the thugs the plot required. Simmons was duly dragging them into the story. Trouble was, he once again opted for the derivative. And the cartoonish became a literal cartoon.

Page 143 tells how, get this, The Alabama Beagle Boys got their name. From a photograph showing the big fat blood-hound faced slobs in a chain gang, wearing horizontal striped prison outfits.

**And it dawned on me. This is the gang of thugs that plays antagonist and foil in, of all things, DISNEY'S**

**DUCKTALES. The one with Scrooge McDuck, and Huey, Dewy, and Louie, and Launchpad, and the rest. The one my kids loved for a couple years as they were growing up.**

Some might consider stuff like this cute, in an allegedly tough detective novel. Even those types would get sick of it if virtually everything in the book came from somewhere else, though. It was at that moment I realized how deeply unserious Dan Simmons is.

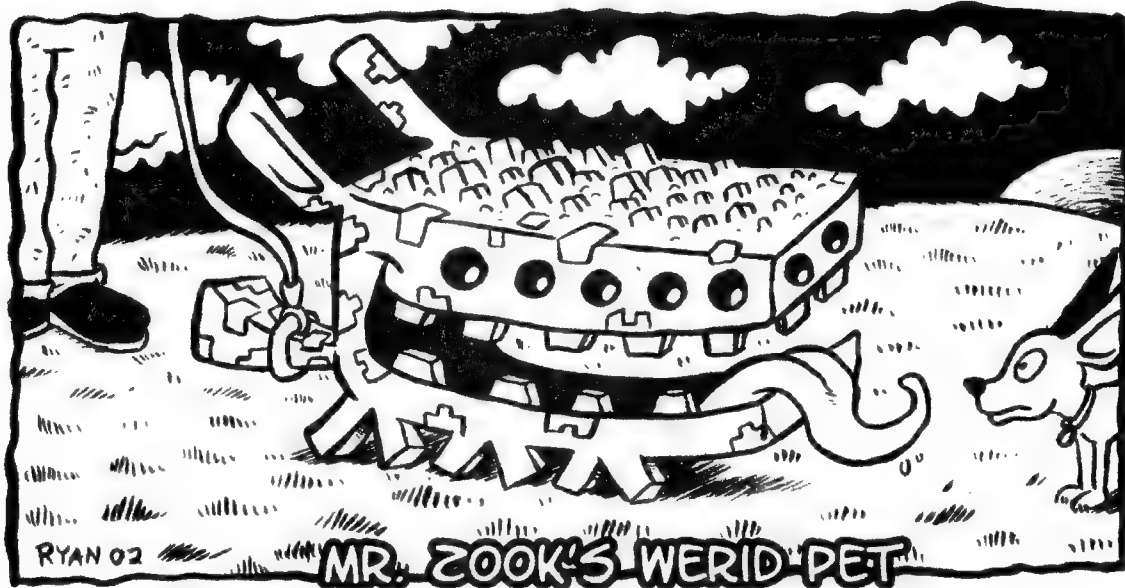
And has always been.

He began his career doing science fiction pastiche. I read the first of a tetralogy he wrote, and it was a string of pastiche pearls, each dead on, each capturing the feel of a different science fiction great. I thought he was slam-dunking them, showing he was as good as they were, so he could then trump them by rising above a level.

Instead, the echoes kept coming, as he worked his way through the genres. He even published a semi-coherent Alfred Bester literary sci-fi novel, *The Hollow Men*.

**He became Mr. Derivative. Not an original thought or scene, character or plot flowed from his word-processor. Oh yes, he writes well on a superficial basis. Good sentences, nicely linked paragraphs, and so on. It's not the execution, or the form, it's the content that's lacking.**

Naturally he won awards. Award committees and voters are nothing if not reactionary, and love nothing better than a blast from their fondly-remembered past. A



fan made good by reworking classics into something little better than fan-fiction, Simmons has become, for this reviewer, unreadable. Why it took so long is a mystery far more interesting than the one in *Hardcase*.

--Gene Stewart

## The Boston Stranglers

by Susan Kelly



Forget the Henry Fonda, Tony Curtis movie; forget the Gerold Frank book; forget Albert DeSalvo's confessions. **If you want the facts behind the frauds and fictions, read Susan Kelly's book *The Boston Stranglers*.**

Yes, plural. There were many, mostly copycats. Some were identified, others weren't, and some ended up in prison or dead regardless.

For a year and a half, starting in June 1962, the poorer sections of Boston and environs were terrorized by a series of murders, at least eight attributed to what the media called The Boston Strangler. Sexual assault and apparent ritual arrangement of the bodies were involved, too. Lurid coverage dominated and everyone cheered when Albert DeSalvo, an inmate of a mental institution at the time, began confessing to the crimes. His confessions were accepted and presented as fact by his lawyers and by the Boston officials involved in the Strangler Task Force despite gaping holes, self-contradictions, and a lack of physical evidence linking him to even one crime.

Essentially, they perpetrated a hoax for gain.

**Kelly's book penetrates the hoax like an autopsy X-ray.** It lays bare, with systematic elegance, the facts in each murder and the reality surrounding DeSalvo, the ADA John Bottomly, the cops, and the families and friends of the victims. Her book also humanizes the victims and offers glimpses into lives not much different from our own, but for the abrupt, brutal endings.

Wit and humor glitter throughout this dark round-up of perfidy and deception. Kelly cites, for instance, "A man from Meriden (or, as he spelled it, Meridin), Connecticut, who laboriously outlined a theory that the Strangler was a sort of Frankenstein monster created by a terrorist cabal. This "crew of orgy sex crazed 'Red

hitlers' " had implanted bugging devices in the bloodstreams of the population of the New Haven jail, turning the inmates into homicidal electronic zombies."

Take that, Samuel Z. Arkoff and Roger Corman.

At another point, when Kelly, DeSalvo's nephew, and others, do a bit of body snatching in order to autopsy Albert DeSalvo's body for forensic evidence and DNA samples, to prove Albert did not kill Mary Sullivan -- and it proves exactly that -- we are treated to a half-giddy ride across state lines from Massachusetts into Pennsylvania that reads in part like a Scooby-Doo episode on crank.

While much of Kelly's book focuses on humanizing the victims, it dehumanizes a few people, too, chief among them ADA John Bottomly, who became a "technical advisor" on the movie and who was portrayed as a brilliant sleuth and hero by Henry Fonda. One cop later said, "I thought his name was That Asshole Bottomly because that's what I heard so often." Other colleagues called him worse, including "...a flake."

If anyone liked him Kelly didn't find them. His arrogance, high-handedness, and gushing enthusiasm -- which bordered on hysteria according to many -- combined with his ambition and vanity to create situation after situation that was at least questionable, if not criminal. He is, for example, shown leading DeSalvo in questioning, supplying him with information, and allowing DeSalvo to view crime scene photographs prior to questioning, among many other things.

## **And here's an interesting fact: Albert DeSalvo had a photographic memory.**

If Bottomly's professionalism doesn't fare well, then F. Lee Bailey's reputation, such as it is, crashes and burns. He is revealed as venal, manipulative, and a liar, more concerned with nailing down the rights for book and movie versions of Albert DeSalvo's bogus confessions than with any kind of legal defense of his client. In fact, in many ways he sold DeSalvo down the river and cobbled up notoriety for the sole purpose of peddling it on the open market. At one point he is shown having DeSalvo sign a release form in his prison cell in direct

defiance of the law. It's a release form Bailey pressured De Salvo to sign without explaining it to him, and thereafter he would answer none of his ostensible client's inquiries.

F. Lee Bailey is portrayed as vain, abrasive, and intrusive, more vulture on the scent of carrion than respected member of the bar. In fact, during the Strangler scramble his privilege to practice law in Massachusetts was reviewed and left intact only by the intercession of more pressing matters for the judge. Kelly's portrait of F. Lee Bailey at his worst is devastating.

She wreaks further devastation, too, by demolishing any notion that Albert DeSalvo was involved in any of the Boston Strangler murders. As with Jack the Ripper, the name The Boston Strangler was media created to sell papers, force political agendas, and deliver audience. The notion of a lone fiend terrorizing Boston and environs was sustained only by lumping crimes that bore only superficial resemblance to each other, such as the use of a neck ligature. And heck, any killer can tie one on, right?

All this took place, remember, in 1962-1963. Things were different. One murder, that of Beverly Samans, took place across the street from Club 47, a café where an unknown Bob Dylan and a slightly famous Joan Baez played their first songs. There was no internet, no cellular phones, and no MTV back then, so word got around slower.

There was more sexism of one kind, and less of others, back then. Two reporters for the Record American dug up and published more details about the crimes than anyone else, but since they were both women, Loretta McLaughlin and Jean Cole were called "Girl Reporters". They were in their 30s and mothers and hardly qualified as girls, but the sexism of the times insisted on such petty humiliations. While we probably wouldn't quite commit the same error today, we might also not allow them access to the crime scenes. So it was a mixed bag, as these considerations always tend to be.

DeSalvo's confessions were likely based on these detailed reports, combined with his knowledge of the places from having visited most of them out of curiosity, or during his burglarizing and raping activities.

## **The panic was fragmented, not uni-**

**versal. The women in trendier, upscale parts of Boston never succumbed to the terror fostered by strident headlines and breathless news reports. Perhaps they knew better than to worry too much about what their family newspapers and radio & TV stations were saying.**

That the murders were a media sensation is true, but in 1963 there were fewer news outlets, more local reporting, and a more centralized control of what got broadcast. Thus, while a huge amount of detail about each crime was published and discussed in Boston newspapers, no clear police opinion was offered. As Kelly makes abundantly clear, the newspapers and other attendant media didn't want to hear from mere police detectives that the dreaded Boston Strangler was a myth. He sold papers and delivered audiences, after all. And so the circus maintained itself, as it does to this day.

Susan Kelly does a surgical deconstruction of DeSalvo's claims. It is thorough and cogent. You're left convinced that the whole Boston Strangler hoopla was a hoax perpetrated in order to take advantage of a weak personality and make tons of money. It worked and also defined what was generally known about the case, until Kelly came along to show us the dangers of buying into common knowledge.

The first edition hardcover of this book, released in 1995, was instrumental in convincing many that the entire case needed a review, and that DNA samples might well clear things up. So it proved to be, and the mass market paperback edition, 2002, features a 26pp update giving the story of the body snatching and the results of the DNA tests.

There is a chapter about Albert DeSalvo's murder, and it seems even that is a fraud of sorts, because no one really knows what happened or how he died. His brother is sure he was allowed to bleed to death after being stabbed, due to the huge amount of blood found around

his body. One thing is clear: Albert DeSalvo was terrified the night before he was stabbed to death. We know this from a call he placed to forensic psychiatrist Ames Robey, whom he begged to visit him so he could tell him something important. Robey in fact agreed, and made arrangements to meet DeSalvo the very next morning, but as he was shaving for the day he heard a radio bulletin that DeSalvo had been killed.

This puzzles Robey to this day, because he knows the prison's floor plan and procedures well, from years of examining inmates there. For a prisoner to get from the cell blocks to the infirmary, where DeSalvo's room was, would require going through several locked doors on several levels, past numerous guards.

It looks like Albert DeSalvo died from a fatal case of officials once again serving their own interests and looking the other way while foul things were done.

Surprisingly, DeSalvo, whose specialty was cunnilingus when he raped -- one victim told a cop, after a line-up where she identified DeSalvo, that she hoped he'd come see her again -- may well have killed a woman accidentally. He may have burglarized her apartment, surprised her, and watched helpless as she collapsed and died of a heart attack. He never willingly hurt anyone, it seems. Except by his lies, and most of these were fed to him.

Why'd he go along? He was a constitutional psychopathic inferior, for one thing. Any stronger personality could easily lead him, persuade him, and control him. George Nassar, a sociopathic manipulator and a prime suspect in some of the murders, was DeSalvo's cell mate and, for a while, ostensibly his legal advisor and literary agent.

Another reason he went along with the fraud that he was responsible for the Boston Strangler murders is that he wanted to be famous, or at least notorious. He was a braggart and his big talk annoyed many who otherwise found him a charming rogue. To be a big shot of sorts was his dream and in fact it may have contributed to his death, in that he may have been used by a prison drug syndicate, and may have thought he'd become a made man mobster or something. It would have been like him to inflate his importance, and that could have bugged the wrong people.

As Kelly's book makes clear, he got notoriety by claiming responsibility for the crimes of perhaps dozens of



others, and by playing ball with legal bottom feeders who needed a patsy.

As F. Lee Bailey's career shows, sleaze still rules. Ask OJ, if you can catch up to him in his frantic search for the Real Killers on those golf courses.

Kelly's intelligence shines through on every page. Her writing is clear as glacial ice and her logic as cold and hard as prison bars. Her research is impeccable and overwhelming. The book demonstrates a mastery of the topic that shames the principles involved.

This is one of the best True Crime books I've read in ages. Grab a copy and have your eyes opened about the Boston Stranglers, some of whom strangled truth for profit.

--Gene Stewart

***"Whatever I am, I'm not a physical me. I am not a thing, a noun. I seem to be a verb."***

***--R. Buckminster Fuller***

## Celebration

Harry Crews



**The critics characterize him an undiscovered gem.**

Undiscovered because, nineteen or so books in, Harry Crews refuses, absolutely refuses to tell anything remotely resembling a simple story. But you don't expect shopworn tales from an alkie who when not drinking himself into a state of insensibility, likes to sit naked in front of a bare wall banging away at a typewriter. The house is bare too, almost devoid of furniture. And its falling to pieces.

Yeah, Crews is probably crazy. Like real gone. Sure bangs out great novels though, and his latest is no

exception. It's sardonic and witty and alarming and wise and the prose as always, is lithe, lean and totally unaffected. At the center of it all is a drunken, mean-spirited, one-handed lout nicknamed, naturally enough, Stump. Stump owns the trailer park where the novel is set and he's making a decent living ripping off the geriatrics populating his mobile home hideaway. Actually, Stump's not so much ripping off the oldsters, he's just ignoring them. Stump keeps the park fairly clean and he figures that's enough. That and the bottle.

Until this impossibly gorgeous young woman waltzes into the park, seduces Stump - she's attracted to his nub - and just takes over. The sweet young thing calls herself Too Much and she believes in "celebration." This means many things but chief among the celebration's components is respect for the elders and working overtime to improve the quality of what little life they have left. As Too Much is a little nutty, her notions of improvement involve strenuous physical activity; even for the terribly infirm. Stump is horrified, "Just let them die in their own time," he screams. Too Much soothes him with sex and asks Stump to wait. And before too long, wild, weird, wonderful stuff starts to happen and the senior citizens begin to find themselves. Their best selves. The selves they thought they lost to old age. Stump becomes more horrified and begins to lose his grip. On himself and the park. Which is fine with Too Much because she has plans on what to do with both.

Like most of Crews books, Celebration works on many levels - tall tale, social satire, sardonic take on magical realism, ribald allegory. There's also the pure pleasure to be had in being in the hands of a master storyteller. A weird storyteller but one who knows that "weird" is not necessarily synonymous with "shocking."

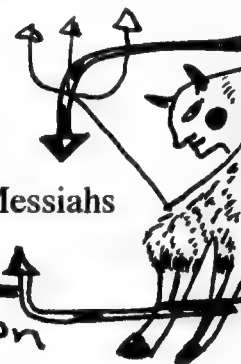
(dom salemi)

## The Devil's Party

A History of Charlatan Messiahs

Colin

Wilson



Every one in Rock Theriault's peripathetic religious cult knew he was crazy. Hell, he claimed he was God. Enjoyed disciplining his followers with the flat side of axe handles. Forcibly circumcised one unruly

member with a knife. Broke every toe on the foot of one really unruly member and then pulled out eleven of the miscreant's healthy teeth with a pair of pliers. But it wasn't until The Rock, sawed off the arm of a female lover with a carpet knife, that his cult began to see the light.

**So what forces combine to create a misguided monster like Theriault? Or any self-proclaimed messiah for that matter?**

Snap judgment would lead one to conclude that this God delusion is rooted in deep feelings of inferiority as a result of an unhappy upbringing. While that would be true of a Charles Manson and David Koresh, for example, it doesn't explain John Humphrey Noyes, a 19th Century New England clergyman who founded a successful free love commune in Oneida, New York.

Well, let's just forget about John Humphrey Noyes because he was a nice guy and, as we all know, nice guys are just not too terribly interesting. Fortunately for Wilson's readers, most cult leaders are not nice guys (notice, no mention of women as women appear not to be prone to such grandiose delusions) they are what zoologists call "king rats" - the 5% of the population that is so dominant as to invariably become leaders of the pack. Moreover, they suffer from what writer A.E. Van Vogt termed, "right man syndrome": an inability, under any circumstances, to admit fault. Presented with evidence of wrongdoing, such a man will fly into a murderous rage. As you have already guessed, these men suffer from deep feelings of inferiority and to contradict them is to force them to admit their inadequacies. Such men also need an audience to help them sustain their illusion of infallibility.

Give these men, real power, as with Hitler or Pol Pot, they have little problem ordering the death of millions. They are right and those who disagree are wrong and so, ipso facto, those dissenters not only must die, they deserve to die.

For mad dictators, power is the kick, the drug that helps sustain the insane delusion of superiority. And they

have millions of people helping fuel that delusion. But what of the rogue messiah with the smaller audience; he does not have multitudes telling him he is like unto a

God, what sustains him? **Power in the form of exercise of dominance over his disciples, naturally, but what else? Wilson believes it is sex. But not just ordinary sex, no; it is the the craving for highly unusual sex.**

Jim Jones made some of his flock defecate in their partner's mouths. Aleister Crowley demanded his mistress allow herself to be penetrated by a goat. Manson had his followers copulating with everything that moved.

King Rats who are Right Men combining, according to Wilson, "the Right Man's craving for domination with the serial killer's urge for the ultimate sexual fulfillment." And when you mix the two you invariably wind up with idiocy, madness and murder.

Wilson's adroit and fascinating book also gives itself over to a study of the psychology of discipleship. The author believes the believers are even more adept at self-deception than those they serve and thus are equally worthy of study. Which makes sense. Does it not, after all, take less effort to convince oneself that your lover's arm must be hacked off than for the lover to persuade herself to sit for the butchery? These are the brides of Christ, giving themselves up totally and completely so as to absolve oneself of all responsibility. Chilling, as the mindset differs little from that of your average churchgoer.

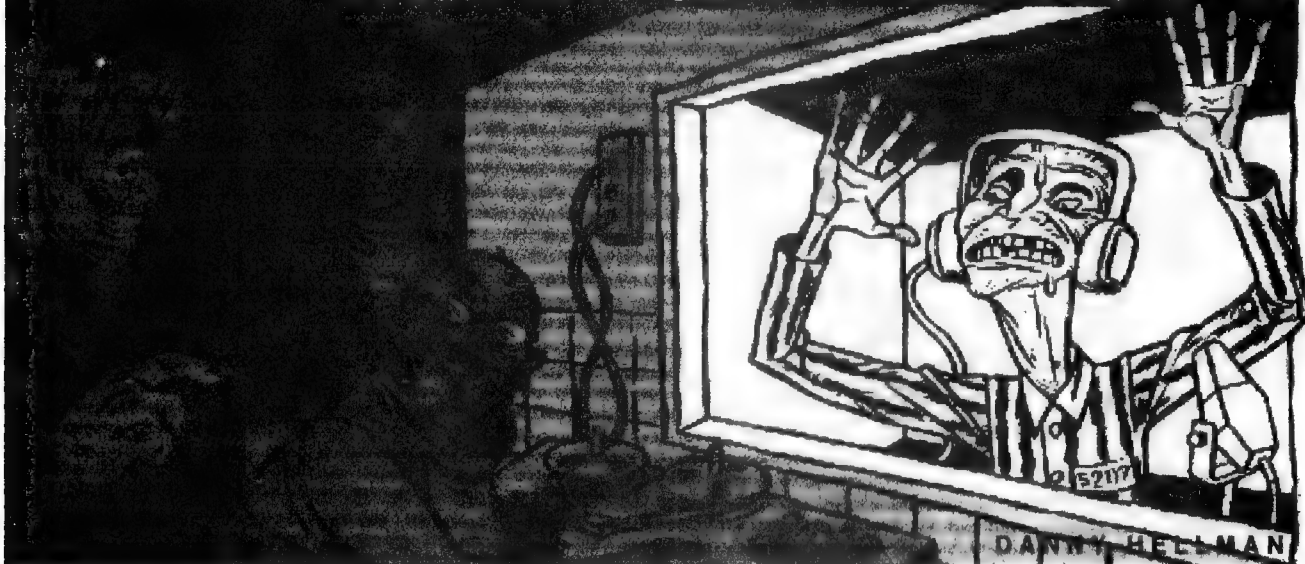
*(dom salemi)*



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# audio Deprivation



## Solomon Burke

### Don't Give Up On Me (Fat Possum)

I was a bit skeptical about this one after reading all of the rave reviews from different sources. It's great that Burke is back and recording quality material, but, to hear some music critics tell it, he hasn't recorded anything but gospel music for 20 years or so. True, it's been 5-6 years, but that's par for the course with some musicians nowadays. My skepticism was also fueled by the approach they took here - getting various "superstars" (all of the White/Caucasian persuasion, and, with the exception of Dan Penn, none arguably real soul singers or writers) to participate by sending in songs. As a general rule, I hate these kinds of collaborative efforts - the results are never equal to the sum of the parts (or I should say participants). So how is this one? Not bad at all. Mr. Burke is still one of the all-time greatest song interpreters and singers, although it's really hard to gauge the strength of his still-formidable pipes here, as he has no real soul shouter-type songs to work. Solomon was definitely the most versatile soul singer in his heyday, with a range from Sam Cooke and Al Green-style crooning to shouting with the best (Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding). For the most part, the songs are fine - although it's bloody obvious who wrote the Tom

Waits and Elvis Costello contributions, and it also sounds like Burke listened closely to the writers' tapes or interpretations of these submitted songs. The best songs, to these ears, are the contributions by Dan Penn (title track), producer Joe Henry and unknown Pick Purnell. The sparse backing band stays out of the way of his way, and lets his voice take front and center - as it should be. This is not so much a comeback album as an attempted crossover - to finally get the White record/CD-buying public interested in him - not in and of itself a bad thing. Recommended, but not as an initial intro to this great singer - get one of his greatest hits CDs first. (John Oliver)

## The Hives

### Toronto (Live Bootleg)



OK, now I see what all the fuss is about! While I admit the Swedish band The Hives has put out several damn good garage/punk CD's over the past few years, I've never quite understood why they're getting such an incredible amount of hype over other older Scandinavian bands such as The Hellacopters, Turbonegro or Gluecifer, for three examples - who all appear to be much better bands to me. A quick listen to this live bootleg goes a long way toward



THE HIVES' Nicolaus Arson, Howlin' Pelle Almqvist, Dr. Matt Destruction, Chris Dangerous, Vigilante Carlstroem

answering my question - The Hives are obviously a very exciting, killer live band that sound like a combination of the early Kinks and maybe the Saints - very heavy, fast riff-oriented guitar rock .....which, frankly, just isn't effectively captured in their studio recordings. After hearing this, I want to kick myself for missing their last show at the Black Cat. My only real complaint is their singer Pelle's annoying insistence on spelling out the band's name and cheerleading repeatedly between their songs. See this band in concert if you can.

(John Oliver)

## Wayne Kramer

**Adult World (Muscle Tone)**

Not counting the Dodge Main and Deep Reduction collaborations, this is Guitar God Wayne Kramer's 5th solo LP/CD in the past 7 years. Sadly, it appears to these ears that he may have peaked with his last one, LLMF, the incendiary live slab o' molten music he put out in '98. On the surface, and upon repeated listenings, there's nothing wrong here per se - the guitar fireworks are there; great playing and adequate if uninspired singing (by Wayne and guests Syd Straw and The Hellacopters) as usual, and Brother Wayne rocks righteously throughout most of the album.....and waxes poetically on the rest. So



why am I disappointed by this latest release? A quick answer - so-so songs. Most of the compositions on this disk tend to echo songs he's already done before....and on those which sound brand new, they're missing hooks or something.....hopefully, just an off-LP, and nothing to worry about.

(John Oliver)

## Mountain

**Mystic Fire (Lightyear)**

After the last couple of Leslie West Solo and Mountain CD's (essentially the same - only it's Mountain if Corky Laing's drumming), I was prepared to dismiss this as so much bombastic heavy metal fodder. Surprise! It's the best thing Mr. West & co. have done in ages. He's still got the fattest and most distinctive damn guitar tone ever, and the trio (West, Laing and one Richie Scarlett on bass) appear to be enjoying themselves as well as playing their asses off. Admittedly, it's not all that original - with West's "Sea of Fire" and "Nantucket Sleighride" basically re-interpretations, along with a heavy-as-all-get-out cover of "Fever". This may be the first product under the Felix Pappalardi-less Mountain that lives up their old rep. Now....whether you see that as bad or good, one would wonder.....but me, I'm gonna put this on, light up a joint and pretend I'm in the 70's again (instead of being in MY 70's, which I'm a damn sight closer to!!!)

(John Oliver)

## Queens of the Stone Age

**Songs For the Deaf (Interscope)**

Old farts like me who were raised on late 50's through 60's rock & roll music probably have a tendency to view "stoner rock" as so much head-banging, noisy tripe.....and we'd be correct to a very



large extent. Bands like Fu Manchu, Kyuss - I openly admit I just don't get them - although I do like Monster Magnet, a stoner band who actually plays what sounds like real songs to me. On the advice of a friend who has great taste in music (basically likes the same type of stuff I do), I bought *Rated R*, the last CD by Queens of the Stone Age, a stoner band who has been making quite a bit of noise overseas. After 1-2 listens, I filed it away - nothing to write home about. This same friend (Hi Kim!) recently saw the band live, and ranted and raved about them....and this time, the band included ex-Screaming Tree Mark Lanegan and drummer extraordinaire/Nirvana/Foo Fighter Dave Grohl sitting in. These same two are 1/2 of the band (along with QOTSA stalwarts ex-Kyuss front man Josh Homme and ex-Dwarves bassist Nick Oliveri) on this latest release, *Songs For the Deaf*. With each additional listen, I can actually hear some damn decent songs/melodies ("No One Knows", "Song For the Dead") behind the droning pounding of their heavy-as-Hell rhythm section. As in the case with Nirvana, Grohl's excellent drumming makes a big difference in the sound of this band. (NOTE: Compare the sound of Nirvana from their first 2 albums versus Nevermind, Grohl's first effort with them.) This is kinda like the heavy metal equivalent of John Lee Hooker or Junior Kimbrough - on the surface, it appears to be a monotonous drone, but there's something musical and magical going on underneath it all.

(John Oliver)

## Shakin' Apostles

### Frontier-A-Go-Go (Big Tex)

Now maybe I'm just a bit biased, having talked several times with the incredibly friendly and outgoing Shakin' Apostles front man Freddie Steady Krc (and I interviewed him as well - it may be in this very issue!), but this is one excellent CD/LP, especially if you go for 60's or 60's-styled country rock, folk rock or psychedelic West Coast madness. Freddie's clearly learned his lessons from the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, Moby Grape, and others of that sort, as well as his mentor and former boss, Jerry Jeff Walker (for whom he held down the drum chair off and on for over 20 years). This is the

Apostles' 5th full-length release, and 4th studio album over the past 10 years - and each new release has been a steady improvement over the last. The latest version of the SA's (Freddie's the one constant in the band over the years) includes ex-Spirit/Jo Jo Gunne bassist Mark Andes and ex-Jimmie Dale Gilmore lead axeman Bradley Kopp.....and it's the best version of the band yet. This, added to Freddie's improvement as a songwriter and singer yields an album that sounds like an undiscovered gem from around '66 or '67. There are tons of electric 12-strings, sitars, and the occasional backwards guitar solo in the mix, and the songs range from blues (the opening "Austin Texas Blues") to sea shanties ("Galveston Bay") to psychedelic delights ("In My Head" and Freddie's tribute to Skip Spence "Child of the Universe") to folk-rock ("New Day") to country-rock ("Jackass Hill"). An eclectic mix, all verywell done. One of the better releases I've heard in 2002. Get it. (NOTE: It'll be available through [www.nonerds.com](http://www.nonerds.com) if you can't find it in your local record store.)

(John Oliver)



Freddie KRC of the Shakin' Apostles

inappropriate, long organ and guitar solos, and generally bludgeoning the shit out of the songs. Oh, and I forgot to mention the pseudo-operatic whiny vocal harmonies - another specialty of said band (and one later adopted by Grand Funk Railroad, Styx, and other such inane acts). After 5-6 LP's and several hit singles, the Fudge faded into semi-obscurity. Rhythm section Tim Bogert (bass) and Carmine Appice (drums) formed Cactus with ex-Amboy Duke singer Rusty Day and ex-Detroit Wheel Jim McCarty (guitar), then somehow managed to con

## Vanilla Fudge

### Vanilla Fudge 2001 (VF Records)

There were very few late 60's/early 70's bands as annoying or obnoxious as Vanilla Fudge, whose specialty was taking the hits of the day ("You Keep Me Hanging On", "Ticket to Ride", "She's Not There", "Eleanor Rigby", "Shotgun", etc.), slowing them down to a crawl, adding

Jeff Beck into forming Beck, Bogert & Appice (a move that forever branded Mr. Beck's musical taste and judgment as very questionable). These two also put out a comeback VF album in 1984, after which the band was never heard

from again.....until now. Imagine my surprise and delight upon stumbling across this recent gem in the used bin of a College Park, MD. CD store. Three-fourths of the old band reunited (Bogert, Appice and guitarist Vinnie Martell, with a ringer for original keyboard player Mark Stein) to start playing again in 1999, and their first comeback record is this 2001 effort. They re-recorded about half a dozen of their old hits, which sound the same as they did 30+ years ago, and they did several new "classics" - including the Backstreet Boys' "I Want It That Way" and 'N-Sync's "Tearing Up My Heart", both squashed and bludgeoned to death. At least they still have a good sense of humor! I believe this can be ordered from the band's web site. While I never really liked this band, their new CD does bring back fond memories.....

(John Oliver)

## The Paybacks

Knock Loud (Get Hip)

The first thing you notice -impossible not to - is this vroom of a voice, a glorious resounding detonation. Hoarse. Exhausted yet resolute. Radiating cocksure sexuality. Ladies and gentlemen, meet Wendy Case, the lead singer and chief songwriter for one of the finest rock and roll bands treading the boards today, The Paybacks. What makes Case and company so fine is their willingness to stick to the basics. Write a decent melody with one or two hooks, throw in

# the BLACK KEYS



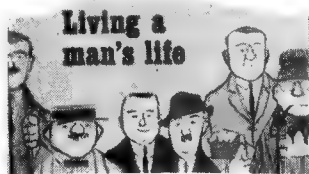
something quirky in the arrangement like a choppy guitar solo or unusual bit of counterpoint and let the singer add color and texture whenever and wherever she feels like it. Sounds simple, yeah? Sure, but it do not be. Listen to The Strokes, who

are also a very clever and inventive band, and see how much they fail to measure up to our friends from Detroit. It may be a truism baby, nevertheless; it's true for all that: it's the singer not the song. And when you got both singer and song, as The Paybacks do (plus a pretty hot six-string slinger), you really got something special. (dom salemi)

## The Black Keys

The Big Come Up (Bomp/Alive)

See, you listen to broke-dick shit like this and you know it's okay to be an alcoholic. Because sober people would never ever come up with such an insane blues-rock hybrid as The Big Come Up. Oh yeah, give yourself just a taste and there won't be no doubt that these two white boys drink. Drink a lot. Don't get this deep rumblin' Mississippi Delta flavor just by listening to scratchy John Lee Hooker 78s. Got to drink. Drink deep. Gives you the courage to throw in that nice, distorted fuzz tone on the guitar when you got the mind to. The kind that would make some of those Fat Possum boys like T-Model Ford and R.L. Burnside proud. It ain't all about the blues though. On neo-funk exercises like "The Breaks," the duo showcase their innate rhythmicalness. Nevertheless, the best cuts are bastardized boogie chillun workouts like "Brooklyn Bound," where The Keys et down and really let their freaky Afro-flag fly. (dom salemi)



## Gore Gore Girls

Up All Night (Get Hip)

One must ask whether one should penalize these white leather booted and mini-skirted cuties for sounding better as Ronette imitators than as cutesy girl apologists for snarly misogynist garage rock. Tough one, eh? Depends on whether you prefer garage or Brill-Building styled pop. As for the Goffin-King thing, the Gore Gores got it down so cold Phil Spector would have trouble deciding whether he had a hand in covers like "Keepy Your Hands Off My Baby" or "Your Last Chance." In considering the 60s punk originals, well, it sure sounds agreeably primitive. "Up All Night" for example, finds one of the lasses pounding on what appears to be a garbage can cover. The astro-ounding opener, "Astral Man," introduces us to the group's trademark ramshackle guitar tomfoolery. Of course, none of this would mean a damn without Amy Surdu's vocal which will absolutely send you as they can go from sultry come-hitherness to cat-scratch fever at the drop of an absurdly overdone false eyelash.

*(dom salemi)*

## Billy Lee Riley

Shade Tree Blues (Icehouse)

You want an understanding of just how unfair life is, you just take a look at Mr. Billy Lee Riley. Here's a man, one of the original Sun recording artists, a man who practically invented rock and roll, a man Bob Dylan has publicly proclaimed as his idol and yet the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame has not seen fit to include in its shallow halls. They say Mr. Riley is "under consideration" at this time. Now if that ain't fair, hard to say what's foul. Hell, that Hall should be begging Mr. "Red Hot" to allow them to put up a statute of him in front of the damn place. Well, no wonder Billy Lee has stopped recording r'n'r and turned to the blues. A good turn for him, as Riley



grew up with sharecroppers in Arkansas cutting his teeth on the stuff. Done pretty well with it lately, too as the last disc, 1997's *Hot Dam* garnered a Grammy nomination. *Shade Tree Blues* is just as good. Five originals, nine somewhat obscure covers running the gamut from rockabilly-tinged blues, to countrified boogie to that thick delta downhome moan. It's understated, smooth and soigne; nevertheless, its got a kick, a burn to it. Like 110 proof Wild Turkey, easy going down, but rests you with a warmth that pulls you a little out of yourself.

*(dom salemi)*

## Parker and Lily

Here Comes Winter (Manifesto)

If David Lynch was searching for composers for his latest surban nightmare, he could do a lot worse than the luminously creepy New York duo. And we're betting said duo would come a whole lot cheaper than Angelo Badalementi! Lily describes this haunted, tinker-toy noir as "strange hush" and really, that's not a bad way of putting it (although if you take a peek at the lyrics, you'll see that the group doesn't enjoy saying much at all). The compositions are deceptively simple, disturbingly stark. Start with a moody, childlike organ riff or a ghostly tremolo/ reverbed guitar figure and overdub disembodied vocal, Carnival-of-Souls' Farfisa, sepulchral vibraphone and skeletal electronic riddims and there you have it: party music for a funeral home. There's a few up-tempo bossa nova intros buried amidst all the quiet disquiet; but even these happy-go-lucky South American imports get zombified.

*(dom salemi)*

## SONNY SIMMONS TRIO

"Live in Paris" Arhoolie Records

Huey "Sonny" Simmons is one of the great, still active sax players to come out of the Bird mold, and

then turn it all into his own. His two LPs on ESP are classics without question, as is "Firebirds", done with Prince lasha. Simmons never really put out any bad records as such; he was woefully underrecorded for much of his career, partially due to bouts of ill health and homelessness. I saw him do a duet thing with drummer Sunny Murray a few years back down here in D.C. along with Brother Gary. The Brother wouldn't have missed it for the world. And Simmons was magnificent, showering the 100 or so listeners with cascading flurries of notes and a very healthy dose of skronk. And afterward we chatted a bit and he was the nicest man in the world, really. I apologize for the digression. Here we get 2 full CDs of Sonny and his trio, bassist Jacques Avenel and drummer George Brown, recorded in Paris in 1994. The liner notes make no mention of the date, but the Arhoolie web site does. Each man gets ample room to show his stuff. Of the thirteen tracks, only four are covers, with all the rest being Simmons originals. They do Tadd Dameron's "Hot House", as well as a nice version of Monk's "Round Midnight". You only have to listen to a couple minutes of any track here to know that Simmons has lived the life, seen it all-the good and bad-, and amazingly has survived and continues to make beautiful music. A guy like this is worth almost any five contemporary sax players that you care to mention. I'm serious. He does it all. There's a beautiful, quiet ballad here, "Purple Kiss", that's as pretty as anything you'll hear, but he also displays that barely contained volcanic energy that makes you think that at any moment he's going to zoom off into the stratosphere. And sometimes he does. Arhoolie should be commended for releasing this vital document from one of the masters still at work.

## THE BLASTERS

"Testament-The Complete Slash Recordings"  
Warner/Slash/Rhino

This is a fabulously-documented, lavishly-illustrated 2 CD set that collects the three full albums, one live EP, and various other tidbits from one of the really great, under-appreciated bands of the past twenty-odd years or so. Punk and New Wave were holding court at the time (we're talking 1980 or thereabouts), and along comes this kinda rockabilly, kinda rootsy band that's tight as hell and they all can play their asses off. They combined that high energy coming

from the Punk scene, but they weren't guys with purple hair and nose rings, and, like I said, they could really play. They filled a certain void, a niche, especially for folks who were into older rock and country and blues more than some of their peers. They did some obscure covers that were always good and right on the money, but they also did mostly originals that were as good as you get-"Hollywood Bed", "Border Radio", "I'm Shakin'", "Dark Night" (used in 'From Dusk Til Dawn'), "Long White Cadillac", and others. Their enthusiasm was infectious, and coupled with their instrumental prowess, they couldn't miss. And they didn't really, although they weren't nearly as big as they should have been. Fronted by Phil and Dave, the Alvin brothers from Downey, California, they eventually added Gene Taylor on piano and Steve Berlin on sax. The great Lee Allen was even a "Blaster" for awhile. But eventually squabbling and internal pressure caused the split. But, man, when they were hot, that was it, Jackson. In this set, we get the rare live EP recorded in London, and the band tears through such numbers as "High School Confidential", "Walkin' with Mr. Lee", "Keep A Knockin'", and Big Joe Turner's "Roll 'Em Pete". They're literally on fire here, and these live tracks will give you the closest approximation as to what the band sounded like live. Today there are so many "roots" bands who claim inspiration from rockabilly, country, blues, what have you, but most of them are pretty anonymous, as far as I'm concerned. It's hard to tell one from the other.



PERSONAL ROCK



The Blasters truly loved the music that inspired them, and they had the talent to not only pay tribute to their influences, but also to create highly original music of their own. Jim Austin of Rhino deserves credit for guiding this project to the light of day. Years ago I sold him an LP of the soundtrack to Brando's "One Eyed Jacks", and we talked about some of our favorite bands, and they included the Blasters and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band (don't get me started). So he knows what he likes, and it's good stuff. Pick up this beautiful package, chill a few beers, and roll back the carpet.

## DEREK TRUCKS

"Joyful Noise" Columbia Records

This is the third solo release from the immensely talented 22 year old slide guitarist, nephew of Allman Bros. Drummer Butch Trucks. He's appeared on many other CDs, including those by Govt Mule, Frogwings, and others. If I'm not mistaken, he's currently on tour with the Allman Brothers for awhile. Here we find him backed by his regular quartet, along with guests Solomon Burke, the Bishop of Rock and Soul, Ruben Blades, his wife blues singer-guitarist Susan Tedeschi (who Bonnie Raitt wishes she sounded like), and I believe the brother of the "Voice of God" Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan. Pretty mixed group, huh? The thing about Trucks is his touch, his sound on the instrument. Sure, he can play the 12-bar stuff all night long, but what sets him apart is his slide sound, the slippery warm feel to it. On the Khan thing, an eight minute mini-raga type deal, he sounds like a sitar without the high pitched whiny trebly sound. It sounds fatter and fuller. And how many Jonny Lang-Kenny Wayne Shepherd guys are gonna do Coltrane and Wayne Shorter tunes on their first disc when they're in their teens? None, I don't think. So Trucks has the chops and the musical sophistication to use them to his advan-

tage. Each of the tracks on this disc are different yet they are all recognizable as Derek Trucks guitar vehicles. The kid's real good, and no doubt will get better. For more, check out the live Govt Mule "With A Little Help from Our Friends" set and hear the kid wail on some very long jams.

## LITTLE AXE

"Hard Grind" Fat Possum Records



**"Pick up this beautiful package, chill a few beers, and roll back the carpet."**

*-Jim Schoene on the BLASTERS!*

It's great to see the folks at Fat Possum branch out into other, more adventuresome territories, like the recent "Breaks from The Delta" disc. And here we get another sideways move, with the latest effort from Little Axe, otherwise known as Skip McDonald off Tackhead fame. Helped by On-U-Sound founder and guru, Adrian Sherwood, McDonald has fashioned a tremendous hybrid of blues, reggae, dub, and otherwordly samples into a swampy soup that covers a lot of ground. Along for the ride are his Tackhead pals, drummer Keith LeBlanc, and bassist extraordinaire Doug Wimbish who helped Living Colour on their more creative efforts. This stuff is made for late night driving or some drunken or drug-addled headphone listening. Strange ghostly sounds drift in and out during each cut, adding to

the mix. Guests include vocalist Bim Sherman, no stranger to On-U-Sound fans, and Ghetto Priest on several background vocals. For the most part, however, it's instrumental dub-blues darkness which showcases McDonald's prowess on guitar, bass, keyboards, and vocals. This definitely should appeal to most Fat Possum fans and also broaden their fan base as well. You get great vocal and spoken-word samples of, among others, the great Howlin' Wolf, floating over funky rhythms and guitar chords and harmonica. Good stuff. *-Jim Schoene*



# dreemykreen

